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THOMAS CHURCH, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Volume II

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THOMAS D. CHURCH, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

VOLUME II

Maggie Baylis
Elizabeth Roberts Church
Robert Glasner
Grace Hall
Lawrence Halprin
Proctor Melquist

Everitt Miller
Harry Sanders
Lou Schenone
Jack Stafford
Goodwin Steinberg
Jack Wagstaff

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

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Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Elizabeth Roberts Church

A LIFE BY THE SIDE OF THOMAS CHURCH: FAMILY, FRIENDS,
CLIENTS, ASSOCIATES, TRAVELS, MEMORIES

Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

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Elizabeth Roberts Church

Interviews held at her home, 2626 Hyde Street, San Francisco

Interview #1 - December 30, 1975

1) Introduction to Tommy

Church: It's too bad Tommy wasn't recorded earlier because he was a very dynamic speaker. He spoke quickly and he didn't wander; it was very much to the point, somewhat edited as he went, whereas I just mosey and wander and so forth. I feel very badly that we never got him on tape at all.

Actually the funny thing about Tommy was that he did not like to speak. When he first came to live in San Francisco he was asked continually to speak at garden clubs and universities. In the early days he had lectures and he had his slides. When we would come back from our travels, there'd be various aspects of our trips that he was asked to speak on. Pretty soon he decided that he just wouldn't do it. He said it made him so unhappy; he worried terribly and he couldn't eat his lunch and so forth. So he just tossed it over his left shoulder and never thought about it again. But I thought it was so strange because he really had a talent for it.

Riess: He had taught too, hadn't he?

Church: He taught a little bit. He didn't like that either. He gave that up also. He taught at Ohio State before he came back to California, for a year after he got out of Harvard. Then, when he first got back to California and decided that he was going to stay here, he got a job at the University and taught there for about a year. That job was taken by "Punk" Vaughan, who was a student of Tommy's at Ohio State; that's how he [Vaughan] happened to come out here.

Riess: It is remarkable how little there is available of a biographical nature about Tommy.

Church: He just doesn't think anything about it; it doesn't interest him very much that anybody would want to annotate or anything; it's so funny--you'd think he would. He's a very modest man, although in his profession he's absolutely sure of himself and all that.

The other day, somebody sent him this beautiful book from England that is written by two landscape architect friends of ours, Susan and Geoffrey Jellicoe. They're marvelous; they're a little older than we are. They had quite a bit in the book about Tommy, and Tommy was just fascinated, you know, because here they had access to everybody. Tommy doesn't think about his uniqueness, yet he really is rather unique. That's one of the things that makes him a subject of interest; he's not only good and successful at it but his approach is unusual.

2) Wilda Wilson Church, Ohio and Ojai

Riess: Could we begin with his family background?

Church: His mother came from the Middle West; she came from Ohio. It was a perfectly charming family, quite a large family, of which she was one of the eldest. A typical Victorian family. The father--Tommy's grandfather--was a judge on the Supreme Court in Ohio. They lived outside of a large town, really on a farm.

His mother had always wanted to go on the stage. She became quite a well-known person in her own right because she was in on the very early beginnings of radio. Her name was Wilda Wilson Church. Wilda Wilson was her maiden name and Church was her married name.

In another age and in another place I feel she would have been like the English character actresses like the wonderful one, Dame Edith Evans, who was in a Dickens film some years ago, Great Expectations. Oh, she was absolutely out of this world! Mrs. Church was very much like that.

She was in radio at the end of her life which was a marvelous medium. It just came at the right moment for her. I noticed in the paper yesterday a man that she was associated with, his name was Don Gilmore. He used to be on "One Man's Family," I think he created it. She was in that for years. Really she was a character actress, and that's what she wanted to be.

Riess: And that was something that her family allowed her to be?

Church: They didn't really like it. That's how she happened to be in Boston. She had gone to Boston to attend a college of elocution that was quite famous in those days in Boston. When she was there she met her husband [Albert Church] who came from California and was a member of an old Californian family.

He was a very brilliant man. He was younger than she. They met and they fell in love with each other. He was at M.I.T. Her family almost died; they didn't want it at all. But anyway, they married and they lived there while he was still going to M.I.T.

After they'd been married a little while, they had these two children (Tommy has a sister, Margaret, younger) and they parted; in fact, he drifted off into something else.

He was an inventor; he invented a lot of interesting things. He was very bright. He was just somebody who, unfortunately, never lived up to his promise. [See p. 446]

Riess: How long was he with the family?

Church: I don't know. I think the children were little; they didn't remember him at all.

Then Mrs. Church took the two children--she was a wonderful woman, she never faltered in her chosen road--and she returned to her family in Ohio and shortly thereafter decided to get her own setting for the children and herself. She got a job teaching school in Ohio and she did that for a long time.

When the children were eight or ten--somewhere in there--she moved to the Ojai Valley because her father had retired and he and his wife had bought one of the really beautiful places in the Ojai Valley. That is where Tommy grew up.

Riess: Oh, that's quite an influence.

Church: It was a tremendous influence. Also, I feel that it crystallized in his mind that he really wanted to live in California.

Riess: I wonder who was in the Ojai in those days.

Church: There are a few people left. There's a woman in San Francisco. We saw her the other night and hadn't seen her for a long time. She's in her eighties; she's quite a bit older than Tommy. She was sort of a girl of Tommy's older cousin, a very glamorous cousin who was just that much older and very, very attractive to all the ladies and so forth. He was a Wilson. He used to be down in the Ojai a great deal.

Church: This girl's name was Helen Baker and she became Helen Reynolds. She was married to a doctor. She lives now in a retirement home over here, but she is one of the foremost conservationists in the state. In fact, she and two other ladies of about her age, who've now died, almost invented the bill against the road signs. And they did a great deal though, you know, it's not perfect, by any means. If you go to a state that doesn't have road signs, you realize what heaven it is to be in that state. She's quite a famous woman. She's really quite wonderful. Anyway, she lived in the Ojai.

People came out to the Ojai from the East whose children maybe had tuberculosis or needed to be in a climate where they could be high and dry and lead a healthful life and live out of doors winter and summer.

Riess: Was it generally large estates, do you think?

Church: No, it was rather a simple life. Many eastern people came out, but it wasn't like Santa Barbara where the eastern people came and had really grand estates. I can't think of any of their names now, but all the famous people that built beautiful places in Santa Barbara--it was almost like Italy. Many of them were influenced by Italy; they had the beautiful villas and the fantastic gardens.

Ojai was somewhat ranching too; they had the lemon and orange ranches. There was a lot of that in the Ojai. I never went there in the old days; I only went there when Tommy and I were first married. Some of the family was still living there then, in smaller houses.

Mrs. Church in the Ojai had a girls' school; it was very well known. She was a great friend of the Thachers.* The Thatchers came out for reasons of health. That's how the Thacher School started, and they came out in the early days.

Riess: But Mrs. Church started her own girls' school?

Church: Yes, she had a girls' school. People speak about it every so often to me. The school was in the winter, the regular school term. Then in the summer there's always been a tennis tournament. The Ojai was a great tennis place. Tennis came from the East; we didn't have the great tradition of tennis in California; the easterners brought it with them.

She opened the school and kept all the tennis people, so that she was really going summer and winter. She was a very marvelous and ingenious woman, she really was.

*Son Anson Thacher, retired assistant headmaster, resides in Ojai.

Church: Then, when it was time for Tommy to go to college--I think he went to college when he was quite young.

Riess: Did he go to a school that was already there?

Church: He went to what was called the Nordhoff Public School. The Ojai was earlier called Nordhoff because the Nordhoffs--Charles Nordhoff of Mutiny on the Bounty--lived there. They had come from the East. The town was named for them, so the high school was named for them. Tommy went there for a few years.

3) Old Berkeley, 609 Arlington

Church: Then his mother wanted to bring the children to Berkeley so that they'd have a little high school. So many families did that in those days--they brought them to Berkeley so they'd get a little bit of high school and then go into the University.

Riess: Berkeley was thought to be a really superb high school?

Church: Their school system was perfectly marvelous in those days, and maybe it still is, I don't know. But it was just extraordinary. I just can't tell you the number of people I've met in my long life that went to Berkeley. I meet people all the time that I remember as a child either hearing that they were there, or knowing them.

Then Mrs. Church became a great friend of quite a remarkable educator whose name was Cora Williams who had what was called the Cora Williams Institute in Berkeley. She took a great big beautiful old house which belonged to the Spring family, who were an old Berkeley family, or at least they seemed old because I had heard about them all my life--and maybe they came from the East. I don't know. They were people of great wealth. They had this beautiful estate and beautiful house which was just a natural place for a school. When somebody in the Spring family died and they no longer maintained it, Cora Williams bought it.

Tommy's mother then became a teacher there. She taught English with an accent on acting. She always put on a play every year.

Riess: I'm very interested in hearing this history of Williams College. I live near it and it's really kind of a mystery place at this point. Who went there?

Church: Lots of people that I know went there. Lots of children that were my age. It wasn't large.

Riess: It was an alternative to Berkeley High School?

Church: Yes. It was a private school, with all the sorts of fringe benefits of that.

Riess: Boarding?

Church: I imagine some people did board, I really don't remember. Tommy didn't go there, but his sister did. I believe they were taken up through high school if they wished, so it must have been accredited.

Riess: I guess when it says "Williams College," it probably is more like college prep.

Church: We had lots of coaching schools in Berkeley in those days too, and maybe it became that. I don't know.

Anyway, it was a wonderful job for Mrs. Church because she and Miss Cora Williams became devoted friends and always remained so. I think the school ended, in that manner, when she died.

Riess: Where did the Churches live in Berkeley?

Church: They lived always in North Berkeley, and they lived in a perfectly charming house which they had just sold at the time I met Tommy.

I knew Margaret; we were in college together. She's younger than I, but we both were in college at the same time. At least, she was there for two years while I was there. I knew her but I'd never met Tommy.

Mrs. Church had just sold this perfectly charming house. I think it was a Gutterson house; he was an awfully good, very understated, early architect--Henry Gutterson. Tommy took me many times back to it afterwards because he always loved it so much. It was way up on the Arlington [609 Arlington].

My family were older residents of Berkeley, and we lived on the south side of the campus. It's the funniest thing--I always just yearned to live on the other side. My sister now does live on the north side. I adored everything about the north side: the hills, the charming houses, and the winding streets. That was just my passion.

An interesting thing is that there was this piece of property adjacent to the Church's that was just a narrow vacant sunny lot. Evidently it had never been built on, and suddenly it was for sale. Tommy's mother bought it. She turned it over to Tommy and that's where

Church: he made his first garden, really created it, and worked terribly hard in it. It was awfully attractive. By the time I saw it, it had grown up, and it had been let go, but it was quite charming. It had a lot of roses. He was always a terrific rose fancier. Perhaps that part was quite formal.

And the house was darling. It was just a typical old-fashioned original Berkeley house. You know, they're quite unique, those Berkeley houses. It had some brown shingle effects. It was on the east side, on the hill side.

Riess: I think it's interesting to know what he [Tommy] was looking at, his environment then.

Church: It's very interesting. And he loves that old Berkeley effect. He always has loved it. Some of the Berkeley gardens were just beautiful, they really were. The people really loved them and treasured them and worked so in them and everything.

Riess: I guess the McDuffie's garden was the famous one?

Church: Oh, that was just fantastic! To be brought to the McDuffie's garden in the spring was just the treat of the world.

Riess: Was it open to the public?

Church: Well, no. Unless sometimes they opened it to the public, I don't remember that, but I just remember that occasionally somebody would take you there.

You know, Berkeley is the most amazing place. I often think about how very lucky I was to be brought up there because it touches all the parts of the world that I've ever been in. People say to me, "How do you know so-and-so?" It somehow goes back to Berkeley. It's so extraordinary.

Piedmont was quite different because that was a much more wealthy community. It wasn't intellectual at all, you see. Berkeley was intellectual and that meant that there were always originals. Not that there weren't many wealthy people in Berkeley, but it started out to be a university community, and in the early days it was, when we were growing up there. There were such marvelous people, so many of them from Harvard. All the young professors that I had when I was there were from Harvard.

Riess: What did you study?

Church: I studied English literature, which was so stupid. Why did I have to spend four years studying it? I mean I was oriented toward English literature because I read all the time anyway. I did get some languages in there. But the classes that I remember that were thrilling were things like Kroeber's anthropology. Anthropology--I'd never even heard of such a thing!

I was awfully young for my age and also young in years, really, and I never got much out of college as an undergraduate. It was when I went back as a graduate that I really got something out of it, terrific. But then I look back and remember very outstanding people that we had.

4) Tommy's Studies at U.C., Harvard, and Abroad

Church: Tommy was there at the same time, but we didn't know each other. It was sort of the war years and he did the four years in three years or something like that.

Riess: He started out as a law student?

Church: That was the tradition of the family, and he was always bright, and I think they just thought he'd be a lawyer. One uncle had a very flourishing law firm, in Sidney, Ohio. I imagine the family just always thought that he'd be there as some of the other nephews had been.

Well, he was filling in [his course schedule] and he just saw this beginning landscape gardening course or something and he decided to take it.

Actually Landscape Architecture or "Landscape Gardening" as it was called until just a few years ago was in the College of Agriculture; when Tommy taught, he was teaching in the College of Agriculture. It was nothing to do with design, though at Harvard he'd studied nothing but design.

Riess: Oh, Harvard was very different, then.

Church: Yes, because Harvard was the first college in this country that put Landscape Architecture under Architecture so that it was in the College of Architecture and had something to do with design.

But anyway, that was what sparked him. He saw this course and he'd always loved gardening and always taken care of his mother's gardens.

Riess: That half lot that you said his mother bought and let him do his first garden on--what age was he?

Church: I imagine he was in high school then, and maybe through his college years. I don't really remember.

Riess: As soon as he discovered that he loved landscape gardening classes then he left the law?

Church: I think he left the law. I don't know that he did really very much in the law. I'd never hear him speak about that. I think he probably had a year or something--I don't know what.

But at any rate, then he learned about this further degree that he could get, and it was called Landscape Architecture. It was at Harvard, and that was the only place that offered this particular thing. He wanted very much to go there, but it was very expensive to go to Harvard in those days, of course, to go back and forth on the train and all that.

So his uncle who had the law practice was applied to and agreed to loan him the money. He was rather sceptical because he'd made similar loans to many of the other nieces and nephews, and he was heard in my hearing to say at one time that Dolliver (Tommy's middle name--the family always called him Dolliver) was the only one who had seen fit to repay him. That was interesting, I thought--extremely. And he followed those lines all through his life.

Anyway, [in 1924] he did go to Harvard. The pictures of him at Harvard look like sort of a freshman in high school--he was awfully young-looking and must have been awfully young in lots of ways. But he made some wonderful friends and he absolutely adored it and he did terribly well.

Riess: Westerners were thought to be sort of provincial creatures then weren't they?

Church: Yes, they were. I believe he even had a little stocking cap or something like that to wear in the snow which, of course, I don't think they ever wore. [Laughter] I don't know what they wore. In Boston, I think they wore fur hats or something.

Riess: I see in the office biographical notes that in 1924-1925 he was a designer with John Nolen City Planners. Where were they?

Church: In Boston. And at one time he was in Florida.

Riess: He was in St. Petersburg in August, 1925 with Stiles & Van Kleeck. I guess these were jobs he had when he was in the East in 1924-1926.

Church: Yes, I think that was so.

Riess: Do you suppose he just didn't come back in that two-year period?

Church: Sometimes he wouldn't come back. Of course he never came back for Christmas. There were any number of Wilsons who had all married and were living in the area of New York or somewhere around there. So he would always spend Christmas with them. He had one aunt who just adored him. They had no children, and so he'd spend holidays with them and they'd have wonderful tickets to the theater and everything. He was in New York a lot.

Out of this [Harvard] class, I think there were three that were considered outstanding, of which Tommy was one. [Also see p. 444ff] Tommy and one of the others considered the third--Stuart Constable--to be the most brilliant, but he never developed. Just too tragic. I mean, he had all the talent. I think he may have died; I don't know what happened to him. The last time I heard about him, he hadn't developed what he could've. Well then, that happens a lot.

At any rate, Tommy certainly did. He made good use of everything that he had.

Riess: He got an M.S. in City Planning and Landscape Architecture. I wonder how strong the City Planning was.

Church: I think that was pretty strong, and I think that maybe was the revelation to him, although funnily enough that never--I guess he could have done that, but he veered more towards smaller things. Then in later years, his work has been almost entirely private.

After the war, he decided he didn't want to have a huge office because it would be like running a business, it wouldn't be any fun. Designing for it would be relegated to others, and he didn't want to do that. So he worked quite hard with his advisors and bookkeepers about how to organize, and he ended by organizing [laughter] practically himself and maybe one or two others.

Riess: How did the Sheldon Traveling Fellow thing come to pass?

Church: That was quite an amusing story. The head of this department at Harvard, a professor that the boys were very close to, a charming man whom I, alas, never met--his name was Daddy Pray [James Sturgis Pray], and he was apparently an adorable person who just knew how to bring out

Church: the best in everybody, they loved him, and Tommy used to tell adorable stories about him--he suggested to Tommy that he apply for the Prix de Rome, which Tommy had never heard of before, and he was very happy to do so. In those days, the Prix de Rome was three years at the American Academy in Rome.

When Tommy didn't get it, Daddy Pray said, "Well, maybe it's just as well because I've put in for the Sheldon Traveling Fellowship for you, and I think it would be more beneficial if you had that and weren't so shut up in one place for three years." (In those days the American Academy people didn't travel; they just stayed in Rome all the time. It was a marvelous life for some professions, but I think for Tommy's it was more advantageous really to travel a little bit and see the great things of Europe, which is what he did.)

So he had that. Also, it was quite a bit more money, and it had visiting privileges at the American Academy. So he spent several months in 1926 at the American Academy and traveled all around Italy. Then he was in France and England and Spain. He really had quite a bird's eye view.

Riess: What places did he visit?

Church: He adored Italy. And France--in later years, we've done a lot of traveling in France and he adores that. He didn't know France quite as well.

I lived in France quite a number of years. I was there at the same time that he was, but we never met. It was very funny--when we did meet finally, after we both came back here, we met at this party and I walked into this room and he looked so familiar, and he said he had the same impression. Now, I presume that we'd seen each other in high school and I'd just never had any idea who he was. But he said that he remembered me, and I certainly remembered him. Very peculiar, we really had some sort of a sense of recognition or something. It was very strange.

5) Betsy in Paris

Riess: What were you doing for your years in France?

Church: I went to Paris after I'd graduated from college and saved a little bit of money--a very small amount--hoping to get a job. I was very lucky, I got one in the American Library there, and I lived in Paris for almost four years.

Church: I was very fortunate. But I was awfully young for my age and I didn't realize how fantastic it was until many years later. [Laughter] Now I look back on it and I think it must have happened to somebody else because I really just knew practically everybody. You know, Paris in those days--there weren't so many foreigners that were living there--and you did know one another. Almost everybody was poor, and you gathered in little cafes.

Riess: It was the time of the "expatriates."

Church: Yes, it really was. You see, they stayed after the war, or they came back.

Riess: So did you know Hemingway and Fitzgerald?

Church: Yes. I did a lot of typing for some of those people because I had a typewriter, a traveling [portable] typewriter that I brought with me. They didn't have typewriters or they didn't know how to get their things typed or they didn't have any money to get them typed. So I did a lot of typing. They all came in the library at one time or another, so I knew them. I'm just interested--there are so many books about Stein and Toklas and, goodness, I knew them quite well.

Riess: How did you get to be such an independent creature anyway?

Church: I haven't the faintest idea. I wish you'd tell me. [Laughter] I'm really rather a timid person. I don't know how I happened to do it.

Riess: But your parents let you--

Church: Well, my mother and father were dead. Our parents had died and we were children with--my mother came from Africa where her English family was involved in mining, and my father was involved in California mining and happened to go there and they met. Then he came out here with my mother, and my brother who'd been born in Africa, to make a long visit, and during that time my father became involved in mining in Mexico so they stayed. They died very close together in the years when we were just growing up and left us, my younger sister and my brother and I, in a very extraordinary family which consisted of my grandmother--a very wonderful Victorian lady--and five unmarried daughters, our aunts. [Laughter]

When I lived in Paris, people used to point out on the street, "There goes that girl"--the French couldn't let it go with just five maiden aunts, it had to be seven--I was pointed out as the person who was brought up by seven maiden aunts. Lots of people in England are brought up by maiden aunts, but there are not so many of them all living together. This was quite an unusual situation.

Riess: They must have sort of fought over you, actually.

Church: I don't know if they did. I think it was rather difficult for everybody concerned. That was probably one thing that propelled me to leave [laughter] and get far away. But anyway, I was awfully lucky, I must say.

Riess: Were any of your aunts women with careers?

Church: Not at all.

Riess: Was it really very "small town" in Paris, as you say?

Church: The Left Bank was, and it was very charming. The French people were just darling. They were so nice to everybody--at least I always thought so. I always loved the French; I got on marvelously with them.

Riess: Was Gertrude Stein someone it was possible to get on with?

Church: Well, yes. I shouldn't say that I knew them--I did know them quite well because they used to come to the library and I would take books to their apartment. [See p. 423] I never went to their salons or anything. I think they thought I was about twelve years old. Probably I was at the mental age of twelve.

I worshipped them both--at least I worshipped Gertrude, but I really didn't know what she was really like. Now I read her books and I think I missed an awful lot. Some of her books I think now are just marvelous, but they were all way over my head, and I'd never heard of any of them.

People said to me at the library, "You come from San Francisco, you know these two ladies." I said, "I never heard of them!" Because they weren't very well known, in Berkeley anyway.

Riess: What did you think you would do with your life?

Church: I was always going to be a writer, but when I began meeting all these writers in Paris and realizing how much smarter they were than I was, I got awfully discouraged. I've done a little tiny bit of writing.

I'll tell you what I've written about--cooking. I became very much interested in cooking, though I never did any when I was over there nor did I go to a cooking school or anything. But it did sort of lay a groundwork. When I got back here and married I really got interested in cooking, and I remain very interested. For a while we had a cook but I was happy when we couldn't keep him and I could cook again and get things as I wanted them done.

Church: I've written quite a lot of articles. I have never done a book. I'd like to, and I might sometime. I think everybody who cooks has something to offer about cooking that's different. I never pick up a cookbook that I don't find some tiny little thing, no matter how small, that is interesting and new and so forth. When I was learning to cook there were few good cookbooks. Now everyone can learn to cook and many become really excellent cooks.

Riess: You came home and then you met Tommy?

Church: I came home after almost four years and I went back to the University thinking, when I first got home, that I would teach French. I guess I was there about a year and a half. I did the work for a master's degree. Then I met Tommy and we got married. I've never done anything about the teaching.

6) Introduction to Marion Hollins and Pasatiempo

Church: When we first were married Tommy was teaching at the University and also he had some outside work. That was what he was mainly interested in developing. But that was the moment of the Depression.

Riess: So when he got down on his knees to propose to you, how did he propose to support you?

Church: Well, we never discussed it. I mean it was most extraordinary, we never have discussed it! I just assumed that we'd manage somehow and we always have. The thing that was fortunate was that on our way back from our honeymoon--after we were married, we drove down to Mexico, all through California, and we sketched all the missions.

Riess: You say "we." You really mean that you were doing it, too?

Church: Yes, I was always very interested in sketching and we used to sketch a great deal together.

Then on our way back we stopped at Santa Cruz because that was where Marion Hollins was developing Pasatiempo. She had come from the East and lived at Pebble Beach and sold real estate while she was playing golf. That's what a lot of those people did in those days. I guess they still do that with those big tracts--of course, Pebble Beach was sort of an ideal situation--the country club sort of thing. You know, every now and then something is made like that.

Church: We started our married life really at Pasatiempo living on a golf course and being involved in all that country club kind of thing, which never appealed really to either of us very much, except that with Tommy it was a fascinating job and with me, I love being in the country. But I wouldn't want to live that kind of life. We were very anxious to come to San Francisco.

Riess: How did he have the contact with Marion Hollins?

Church: Bill Wurster had met Marion Hollins [through Elizabeth Ellis] and had begun to do some building for her there. That was in the very early days of his career. We were going off on our honeymoon and as we were leaving Bill pulled out of his notebook an address, written in his tiny little handwriting and on the back scrawled "Stop by Santa Cruz."

In those years we'd always by-passed Santa Cruz because everybody went to Carmel, that was the great place to go, and Santa Cruz's day of elegance was quite a bit before that. As children, we used to be taken to Santa Cruz, and we'd stop in Felton, those mountains, but never stay in the community of Santa Cruz. When we got a little bit older it wasn't quite sophisticated enough and we felt we should go to Carmel. So I hadn't been to Santa Cruz in years. But we did go through there on this drive, and Tommy said, "Bill told me to go and see this person, so why don't I do it." So we did.

She was interested in Tommy and also, here we were starting out, and she thought that if we would build a house there, she would finance it practically entirely (we didn't have any money and it was the Depression--nobody had a cent in those days). But she was anxious to get places built. We did build a house there, really a lovely house that's still there; it's just charming. We lived there for about a year and a half.

Riess: Bill Wurster designed it?

Church: He designed it, yes. He and Tommy did it together. It's awfully funny because everybody scoffed when it was done. Tommy insisted on having a living room and dining room combined; I've never had a [separate] dining room, this is always the way we've lived. But in those days, usually people always had a dining room all set with a bowl of flowers [laughter] that stayed there all the time.

This Pasatiempo house was long and low, really a very charming house. At one end of this big room was a fireplace, a very cozy, beautiful fireplace. Tommy said, "I want several steps down, and around the fireplace will be these sofas arranged and that will be the soft, cozy part to sit in." Bill argued with him and several people said, "Oh, Tommy, that's a terrible idea. People will fall and break their hips."

Riess: But that's the beginning of the "conversation pit."

Church: And you know that now people do it all the time!

Then we had the most marvelous kitchen. It really was out of this world. It had a fireplace in it. Also that had a built-in thing so that you could sit and have breakfast in front of the fire if it was cold--absolutely delightful. Everybody made an awful fuss about that, they thought that was awfully peculiar. I'd entertain in the kitchen, and that was considered terribly strange.

The drainboard and the kitchen sink were before some windows which looked out onto a perfectly beautiful scene--in the spring, azaleas, wild azaleas and everything. It was just beautiful. That has made an indelible impression on me--you should never have a kitchen sink where you can't look out, because it's so frustrating to have a sink full of dishes and not be able to see over that.

Then Tommy said, "I'll make a hole at the end of the drainboard and we will have a thing that leads down and the garbage will go down in there. Then the garbage man will just come around and get the garbage"--instead of having to take the garbage out, which everybody always did. Everybody said, "Oh, Tommy, it's too ridiculous!" This was the first disposal. [Laughter]

Riess: That's such a wonderful story, my goodness.

The idea was that he would live right on the estate and would be the designer from then on?

Church: Yes. He did all the basic planning. Then each time a house was done, they didn't know anybody else, so they asked him to do the garden.

We have a place in Santa Cruz and we go down there as often as we can, but we haven't been to Pasatiempo for a long time. Someone told me the other day that the house was sold again. For a long time it was owned by someone and it wasn't very attractive inside, I understood; I never saw it. But the person who has now taken it has really done it perfectly beautifully. I'm going to go by and call on them sometime; I'd like to see it again.

7) Bill Wurster

Riess: When did Tommy and Bill Wurster meet?

Church: They met through me. I had known Bill before I went away. He had just returned to California. He'd been traveling in Europe and had worked for a year in the East. He was a friend of great family friends of mine in Berkeley. They had been in Africa and they had been friends of my mother's family so it was a thing that went way back. One of the sons was an architect and he and Bill Wurster had been in college at Berkeley together. Then Bill left Berkeley and went to Europe for a year or so. When he came back he had a job in New York for another year. Then he decided, much as Tommy did, that his destiny was California.

Riess: Well, I know that the connection for Bill Wurster, coming back to California, was Elizabeth Ellis.

Church: Yes, partially. But he decided definitely that California was where he wanted to practice. And he wanted to practice. He was always very much of an individual just as Tommy was. They had many things that were very alike. They saw completely eye-to-eye as far as the work picture went.

In any case, I was away and didn't see him again, but by the time I got back, he was really established. He'd already done the Gregory's farmhouse, which many people feel is almost his greatest house. It's really extraordinary. People who come out here from the East, they can't believe it. And it was one of his very early houses. It is a perfect house. You cannot do anything in that house that is wrong.

Of course, it was a very remarkable client, Mrs. Gregory--she was a wonderful and extraordinary person to whom Bill was terribly devoted, and I think they influenced each other very much. [See following chapter]

It was the moment in California when everybody was building pseudo-Spanish houses. I love the Spanish influence and I feel it's tragic that we've lost so much of it here, or have such bad Spanish types. But that was what was built in those days. In one way, the Depression did a good thing because those houses became too expensive to build and people really stopped building those houses for a while, you know, they were building very, very inexpensive, simple houses.

Church: Our house at Pasatiempo it seems to me it was \$9,000 and there was a lot in that house that was special--doors were a special size and all kinds of things. In fact, we heard the other day what it had sold for. Now, of course, I've forgotten, but I think it was almost \$100,000. And it wasn't a very big piece of property. It had a nice garden.

In any case, I introduced Tommy and Bill. Then when Tommy started working at Pasatiempo, he and Bill worked together, and shortly they worked quite a bit together.

Riess: What was it like when they first worked together?

Church: I think they got on wonderfully. Tommy always felt that Bill was fantastic.

Riess: Were they talkers? Did they sort of theorize together?

Church: Bill talked a lot. Tommy never did. Tommy felt that Bill's plans and his thinking on the job was superb. I think he feels that it's almost the best that he's ever worked with, although I don't know. He felt very, very strongly about Bill. I don't know, as I say. He never compared or anything like that, and he did work with a lot of marvelous architects. Whatever they worked on together, it was very harmonious; that was always my impression of it. Those were very wonderful days.

Riess: They sound like wonderful days.

The two of you were uniquely free, to pursue your own directions, you and Tommy, because of your families being so minimal.

Church: Yes, exactly. We really did.

Of course, there again, you don't realize until something is past that you've been living through such extraordinary times. I didn't make enough notes. I guess I'd start to and then I wouldn't. I really wish I'd written down more factual things because we did have some very amazing experiences and meet some fantastic people.

But there's an awful lot of that--everybody's annotated everything so much, maybe it's sort of a relief that I haven't.

Riess: When you were down at Pasatiempo, did you have children?

Church: No, we didn't have any children for a long time. We had Judy about five years after we were married. Then Belinda was born about three years after that. I was old--we both were. I was 26 and Tommy was 28. I was over 30 when Judy was born.

Riess: When Tommy was down at Pasatiempo for those years, was he working only there?

Church: No. The arrangement was that he would get whatever work he could. Marion Hollins paid him a base thing. Then whatever money he made, it would be deducted from that. He did quite a bit of work; she always felt she got a bargain. She was always very devoted to Tommy.

Riess: That was during the Depression.

Church: Yes. Of course the Depression didn't hit California really until the spring we were married. The crash was 1929, but it took about a year for it to get out here really and get really going. By that time, people were awfully broke. And Marion Hollins, most of her years developing Pasatiempo she was very broke, she had a very hard time. In the end, poor thing, it was awfully sad, she'd had quite a struggle and she had to let it go.

8) 2626 Hyde Street

[Telephone Interruption]

Church: [Talking of remodeling and adding on to 2626 Hyde St.] Tommy had made a dog run for our dogs--we always had these dogs. One day he looked out and saw them sitting all day in the sun, using up the nicest part of the garden, and he decided to take it [dog run area] away from the dogs and build the wing. So he did. It's been there ever since.

But I think to open the gate [to the garden] is quite marvelous, don't you think?

Riess: I think it's quite marvelous.

Church: I never fail to get a big thrill. I come home from struggling downtown or goodness knows where and I walk through the gate and I'm just staggered. Then, quite a number of years ago, and later, we bought the flats. We bought this house from two ladies that had been born here. It was a very old house--I mean the main thing, the original, is very old. It was just a little shack, sort of a miner's shack, I think.

Riess: Oh--what condition was it in when you bought it?

Church: Well, it was in pretty bad condition. It had been lived in since the miners, but they say that this was all little hills that went down to the water, this area, and before Hyde Street was graded for the cable cars, this house stood right on a little hill--this level was on a hill. So there's really another level; it's not technically a basement because it's not underground, the first level as you come in the garden. Then when they graded Hyde Street, of course, that was all scooped out.

Riess: When did you buy this?

Church: We lived in it for a long time before we bought it because we didn't have any money to buy it. We spent lots of money fixing it up. When we bought it, of course we had to pay for all [laughter]--

Riess: For all your improvements.

Church: I don't remember when we bought it. Sometime after the war.

Riess: But you moved up here when?

Church: We moved here in about '33, I think. For one year we lived in what used to be a Chinaman's room in an old shingled house, a Willis Polk house on Vallejo, a charming place. We loved that. It was wonderful. To go up that street, it was like a little private cul-de-sac. Now it's the né plus ultra. I suppose even the Chinaman's room is probably--

Riess: What do you mean by the Chinaman's room?

Church: Well, the Chinese were always in the basement because they smoked opium and the people who had this Chinaman didn't want the smell of opium in the house. The smell actually isn't too objectionable, it's just sort of sweetish, not nearly as telling as pot. You know you can always tell when somebody's been smoking pot. But there's a sweetish thing about opium, and they didn't want that.

But it was just about the time when people were beginning to rent Chinamen's rooms and be very happy to have them. In those days it was hard to find places that you could afford. Anyway, that's where we lived for a year. Then we found this house and we just felt we had to have it. It hadn't been lived in for quite a long time.

These two dear ladies, two German ladies, had been born in it and tried to dissuade us. They said, "Oh, Mr. Church, the roof leaks!"

Tommy said, "I'll fix it." [Laughter]

- Church: Then they just couldn't believe their eyes when they saw how he was doing.
- Riess: He started right away on the garden?
- Church: He started working on everything. And you know, it's so funny, it's had no effect on this neighborhood at all. It shows how weird that sort of a thing is. You think that something like that is going to raise the general atmosphere, and nobody else fixed their houses or worked on their houses or did anything--well, I shouldn't say that. A little bit was done, but not much.
- Riess: It's fairly well hidden, after all. You have to open the gate to know about it. Except those two stunning trees--were they there?
- Church: No. Tommy put everything in. The garden was just a little sloping thing with a little fruit tree in it. It didn't have any sort of plan.
- Riess: How much do you get your oar in on garden decisions?
- Church: Not very much. I don't really know very much about gardening. I'm just now thinking at the end of my life, "Isn't it terrible I learned so little!" I've never assimilated plant names or anything like that. I'm very appreciative but I just haven't been a student of it.
- Riess: I think that would probably be the safest thing to do.
- Church: Well, I always felt Tommy wouldn't really want me leaning over his drafting board, making remarks. I think some people work wonderfully together; I don't think he would have liked that at all. In fact, I'm sure he wouldn't have because I used to sigh and say, "Oh, they're so compatible and they have this wonderful life creating these things together," and Tommy always said, "It's not for me! Wouldn't do for me at all." [Laughter]
- Riess: Did he ever work at home, or always in the office?
- Church: Yes, he's worked at home, he's always had a drafting board at home. He's always had a drafting board wherever we've lived. He has one at Santa Cruz too.

It's funny about Santa Cruz. Years later, he was working on the University down there. Isn't that interesting? Our lives are sort of entwined in Santa Cruz.

Church: All these years--besides all the work he's done, he's maintained three complete gardens, these two--we have another one off the kitchen--and the one at Santa Cruz, where we'd just be weekends.

Riess: By maintained, you mean weeded and scrambled around.

Church: He did all the work--all the repotting, all the watering. We'd rush to Santa Cruz, just get there, and have to start watering!

It's really just fantastic. People are always asking, "Who takes care of your places?" Now they're really awfully sad, and Santa Cruz is awfully sad. I'm not trained as a gardener, and also I have to cook. [Laughter] I never felt that cooking and gardening went terribly well together. If I ever got started gardening, I'd never be able to find the time to come into the house.

9) Architectural Influence of Berkeley

Church: I was speaking earlier about Tommy's house [in Berkeley]. I realize that so many of those houses have influenced me. Our family didn't live in a house like that, we didn't live in one of those lovely redwood brown shingle houses, we lived in an old Victorian house on Piedmont Avenue between Durant and Channing, and I really hated that. As a child I realized it was a hideous house.

Riess: Is it still there?

Church: Thank goodness, it's gone.

But the street was lined--not lined, but many Julia Morgan houses were up and down. It was a lovely situation. Piedmont Avenue was beautiful in those days. Then, of course, I knew the [Charles] Greene family. I used to go down and stay with them in Carmel. Of course, the famous Greene house, the Thorsen house, is right there. We watched that being built, timber by timber, wooden peg by wooden peg.

Then, right across the street from the Thorsen house was the Gayley house now done over so it doesn't even look like it, but that was a Julia Morgan. It was a really beautiful house.

I remember years later really almost the first sort of aesthetic experience I had in life. We moved from the Gothic horror to a smaller redwood house, which was quite nice, on Benvenue. I used to walk to college and always cut through the [Maybeck] Christian Science Church.

Church: To me, that still is one of the most beautiful! Of course, in the spring, with those wisteria that must be ancient now if they're still there--

Riess: Did it always have the soft, old feeling?

Church: Yes! I was there when it was being built. He just created this ancient Gothic architecture right on the spot.

Another person I knew was Isabella Worn. She was the great garden person. She and Julia Morgan used to work together, I think, sometimes. She didn't actually do the gardens; she sort of took care of the borders. She was never considered a designer, but she was really a fabulous horticulturist, a wonderful gardener. She must have been younger than Julia Morgan, although I think of them as sort of the same period, kind of dressed the same, with long, sweeping skirts. Isabella Worn died not too long ago.

Julia Morgan still had an office when we first lived here, because an architect-friend of ours, whose name was Francis Lloyd, worked for her for many years, and that was certainly when we were first living here.

Francis Lloyd was a very good architect, quite eclectic. He and Tommy worked together a lot. After he worked for Julia Morgan I think he was on his own for a long time here. But it must be at least ten years since he retired and went to live in Grass Valley.

Interview #2 - April 20, 1977

10) Individuality and the California Client

Riess: Was there a sense then of California being a place where one could do new things?

Church: Absolutely. New things and develop on your own. The East in those days--now it's not so much now--but in those days, in the thirties the East was very much in the Beaux Arts and in the great estates and in the French provincial and the more elaborate styles. There were modern things going up, but it wasn't anything that you breathed in in the air. It was a very isolated thing.

Later there were these great modern masters that came over from Europe, left Germany in order to escape from things that were taking form. Of course they had a lot of influence once they got here and really got started teaching, because that's what they all did. But in the thirties they hadn't come yet and people's observance of modern things was limited. The young people that were able to travel and had seen some of these things in Europe, they were influenced by them, but it was nothing like what it later became, a complete outburst.

I know when we first were married and lived in San Francisco--now that was in the middle thirties--people used to come through here all the time and it always surprised me that they were so crazy about San Francisco. They said, "This is so marvelous." And we'd ride down one of the residential streets and they'd say, "Look at this" or the Marina and they'd say, "Look at all the originality in these." To me, I thought it was awful, because I was used to the European cities, like Paris, for instance, where the great thing was the harmony.

A French architect friend of mine many years ago told me a wonderful thing. I've always remembered it. He said, "America and France are very different." He said, "Here all your individuality comes on the outside. Your houses," he spoke particularly of New York, he said, "Your houses are very much alike inside."

Church: I used to notice that, when I'd come back from Europe, I'd notice that you'd go from apartment to apartment and everybody would have this kind of a plate and they'd have that kind of a chair. And the French people don't do that at all. The insides of their houses are very individual, and they're very like themselves. And the outside, the harmony of the street, is preserved by this lovely sort of houses alike.

When I came home, of course I knew how it was here, but I'd sort of forgotten about it. I thought, "Oh, how awful this is." I used to go on the Marina and I thought, "My goodness, just look at this." I used to say to Tommy how terrible it was and he didn't ever say too much. I could see that he didn't agree with me and that he agreed with these people that came out and were just inspired by the originality. You see, that, to them, was the great thing because, of course, it was the creative thing.

Riess: It always verges on chaos, though.

Church: Well, it does and we do have a chaotic effect on the streets. Of course, that's where Tommy was lucky because gradually people realized that planting and trees and all of that subdued some of this eccentricity. That really became the great foil. He was lucky to be in on that in the very beginning I think.

Riess: Do you think that people were individual in their gardens?

Church: Well, it depended. I think Tommy had much more opportunity to have individual conceptions and solutions to people's problems.

Of course suddenly the whole thing changed, and it really changed more in the garden than it changed in the house because, first of all, upkeep began to go by the board. They realized that they could no longer have these great sweeping lawns. Nobody had gardeners; the gardeners were one of the very first of the help that went in the Depression.

Then the next thing was that these people that had smaller pieces of property wanted all these things: they wanted a tennis court and they wanted a swimming pool, eventually. Swimming pools were a little bit slower in coming.

I remember in the thirties when we began to travel more and we'd fly down to Los Angeles quite often--we flew quite a bit in those days--we'd fly over and all of a sudden looking down we'd be so amazed. I'd say, "Tommy, look at all those swimming pools! I don't believe it!" It just was a rash.

Church: Then also there was the idea of the place for the children to play and everything. You know, it's the funniest thing, we'd go to these weddings, well about the time our oldest daughter was married, and Tommy would say, "You know, that boy, I made his first playground." [Laughter] And then when Judy married Decker McAllister-- the family were friends of mine from Oakland for many, many years, not the McAllisters so much, but her family--Tommy said, "Now, isn't that funny? I made a playground for those boys when they were just eight or nine years old!"

Riess: If people's interiors expressed such a lack of originality, you'd think they would want kind of "safe" gardens in that same way.

Church: Well, I don't know. My memory of some of those early days--I used to go quite a bit and be sort of in on conferences. (Not in on them, because I had no understanding at all of it and I was never able to visualize a single thing; I'd see the plan on the paper and I could no more make it rise like this [gestures] from the flat thing I saw in my mind, than the Man in the Moon.) I did used to hear Bill and Tommy quite often. They approached the problem from very much the same point of view. I think I'm perfectly justified in saying that.

It was a little bit different from the old-fashioned thing of let's say the twenties and before the Depression and when America was really evolving. The great houses and even less great houses, almost all of them were taken from the European background and in the East. But Bill and Tommy questioned their clients very much, and they asked them what they wanted. They told them whether they could have it or not on the piece of ground that they had, which was also sort of a departure because as you know, hundreds of buildings are built on something terribly inappropriate.

Tommy always tells the story of one of his early jobs. I think it was in Piedmont. It was rather a hilly place. He was called to do the garden long after the house was all done. The people were about to move into the house. Tommy came back and he said, "You know, they can't get a road up to the front door." [Laughter] So it showed rather decidedly that there was need for thought on that score. I suppose the builders or whoever had just placed the house. Usually somebody wants a house that sticks way up in the air and they want to put it right on the top of the piece of property [laughter] and there's no property left to use.

I think that concern was new and I really think that came, I honestly think--oh, I don't know, people could argue with me about it--but I wasn't so conscious of that feeling in the East ever. I know that all these younger people used to come out and they'd just exclaim,

Church: they'd think it was so marvelous and of course an awful lot of them came out and stayed. And you know that's how we got interesting architecture here, in the beginning, because after the earthquake all the younger men in these offices were so inspired by coming out here and doing these things.

Riess: I should imagine that the California client was more imaginative and fun to work with, too.

Church: Well, they particularly were here because here we didn't have so much of the big eastern money which came to Santa Barbara and southern California, particularly Santa Barbara. We really have the vest estates like the early estates in Montecito and Santa Barbara where they could afford to copy the great European gardens.

Riess: So there they were carrying on an eastern tradition.

Church: They were, and the Spanish. That was another interesting thing. You see, we let the Spanish just go, which is so terribly sad I think. We only have a few Spanish buildings--only the Mission really. And we did the same thing in Monterey; we let most of that go. When I used to go down there as a child, that was almost an entire little Spanish village right on the main street of Monterey.

11) Lockwood de Forest

Riess: Was Lockwood de Forest someone you knew?

Church: Yes, Tommy was very devoted to him. We knew him from the very beginning.

Riess: How did the two meet?

Church: Lockwood had come to Santa Barbara from New York. He belonged to a very interesting family in the east, a very distinguished family.

His brother was a most remarkable man. I believe he was older than Lockwood. In fact, I've been shown their house in New York. It was down in Washington Square. It was one of the beautiful 18th century Georgian houses. The brother was born a hunchback and never was able to operate as an ordinary person. But he was a genius and they say that he used to just lie flat on the floor and design these things. He designed I think something to do with a radio, some electronic or some fantastic thing.

Church: I think of the de Forests sort of like the Adams family or something like that. They traveled. I don't know about the other children; there must have been more because I think of it as being sort of a larger family. Where he went to school, I don't really know. I've forgotten, if indeed he went to school. I don't think he ever bothered, Lockwood, he was a complete original. He never bothered belonging to the landscape society or anything like that. He wouldn't have been interested in that at all.

Riess: Did he start out studying maybe with Olmsted or somebody in the east?

Church: It's possible. They may have come originally from Boston. That's perfectly possible. I don't remember. Bill Wurster would have known because he also knew him. But we met them because Lockwood had married a girl who came from a family that I had grown up with, the Kelhams that lived in San Francisco.

Riess: He was the architect, was he. George Kelham?

Church: No, it wasn't that Kelham. It was another family. There were two girls. One, the younger one, was my friend, my contemporary.

Elizabeth [de Forest] was quite a bit older. She's still alive and we see her quite often. She's helped on certain things of Tommy's. She's a horticulturalist really and a very delightful person. She lives in Santa Barbara.

The other girl married Francis Lloyd, the architect, who used to work for Julia Morgan, and now lives up in Grass Valley.

But he [Lockwood de Forest] did a lot of the things in Santa Barbara and he was so gifted, oh! And Tommy just adored him--they saw absolutely eye-to-eye.

Riess: Did they correspond or did they just simply see each other when they were--

Church: They saw each other in Santa Barbara. Of course Lockwood was a garden architect, so they weren't working together. They simply had a wonderful mental rapport.

Riess: His practice stayed in Santa Barbara?

Church: Mostly. He came to do one or two things on the Peninsula at one time, I think in the very early days. I think he came up a couple of times and worked on something of Bill Wurster's before Tommy was in practice.

Riess: How were Lockwood's gardens different from Tommy's? How would you characterize the differences?

Church: Goodness--how to say. They were very individual. Of course, with his wife, with the wonderful horticultural touch, they had the--you see, I'm just not knowledgeable about how to describe.

Riess: Well, you do describe the houses of Santa Barbara as being great estates.

Church: The big houses, yes. Most of the gardens that I saw of Lockwood's were small, I mean they were small in comparison to the big estates. They were not estates. His own house and garden, for instance, is absolutely charming. They were very quiet, very understated.

Riess: What structural materials did he use?

Church: He had gravel. He was very fond of gravel. I remember that. Of course, now gravel is sort of going out because it also presents an upkeep problem. I do remember that in a lot of his gardens the paths were gravel.

Riess: In a letter that Tommy sent to Bill he asked, "Do you think I might write Lockwood" about an idea he [Church] had for parterres for the Henderson garden [1934]. It sounded like he was thinking of Lockwood as a kind of luminary, like "would it be all right to bother Lockwood?"

Church: I think that's true. Although Lockwood was completely unconventional. I think they must have come from Boston, the more I think about it. [Laughter]

Riess: That's the only place that gives you that liberty?

Church: That wonderful individuality. They just made up their own minds and they just did it. Oh! he was a marvelous man. We did see quite a lot of them later on. I think Tommy probably did defer to him in every way because he was a little bit older. But I think in the end Lockwood grew to love and admire Tommy very much.

12) Tommy's Habit of "Dropping In"

Riess: When you went on the honeymoon and you were sketching missions, did you also look in on other kinds of gardens or landscape architecture work through the south?

Church: Tommy had a few people to see, like the de Forests. That was when I met the de Forests for the first time. I think Tommy had met Lockwood and I had known Elizabeth, but not really well at all.

Riess: And how about anybody in the Los Angeles area?

Church: You know, isn't it funny, I can hardly remember stopping in Los Angeles at all. I think we may have just spent the night or something and just driven hastily to get on to more country. I remember we went to San Diego and then we crossed over into Mexico. We didn't stay very long, just in the northern part of Mexico. But then we turned around and came back again.

Then, this always happens--every trip we've ever had since--Tommy began to get eager to get home. Now this time I don't know what drew him. Oh, I know! I guess he had that visit to Marion Hollins on his mind then. As always, he saw things more clearly than I did.

Riess: You mean he saw the opportunity clearly?

Church: Definitely. And I imagine he perhaps saw just exactly what happened, because he often did.

Riess: Do you remember the first meeting with Marion Hollins and the excitement about it?

Church: I'm afraid rather vaguely. I wasn't in on it. I think I mostly sat in the car. My role was sitting in the car [laughter], well supplied with knitting and books.

Riess: With the engine running? You sound like a moll, ready to drive away.

Church: No, I didn't have the engine running--I didn't know how to drive the car, either. I didn't drive 'til I was quite advanced in years because Tommy always had the car. There was no opportunity for it. But I always had knitting and I always had a book.

The funny thing is that that habit of his continued far into old age. When we'd be motoring in Europe, quite often I was very shy and hanging back from visits and always thought the most terrible thing was to be thrown out.

Tommy would say, "Well, why do you worry about being thrown out? The worst thing anybody can say is 'No' or 'Would you please leave?'" And he said, "What's so terrible about that?" And I remember thinking, "Well, he's actually right. What is so terrible about it?"

Church: Not so long ago we were motoring somewhere and we came to this beautiful place and I said, "Tommy you can't go in there. I mean you just can't go into people's places like that. You have to be invited." Tommy said, "It's perfectly ridiculous." And he went in and he was just gone literally for hours. They took him all over. And he never said, "My poor wife is sitting out in the car." They gave him tea and I don't know what all. I was so mad I could have killed him. But that happened again and again.

13) Sir George Sitwell

Church: Just to diverge for a moment, I'll tell you another funny thing about that. Years ago, when he was first at the American Academy as a student in 1926, I guess it was, one of the trips from Rome for the boys was to go up to Florence and look at all the villas. One of the villas was Montegufoni, the Sitwell's villa outside of Forence.

Tommy couldn't stand just peering through, it just drove him absolutely crazy. He suggested that they enter the place. So, I don't know how the guide allowed them or admitted them or maybe he was looking the other way or something, but at any rate they really did. I think he used to say that they climbed over a wall. I don't see how that's possible, but anyway they did enter, and they were apprehended almost immediately by Sir George Sitwell, a most frightening gentleman with a pointed beard, who was just incensed.

He asked them what they were doing and all that. Then he said, "Well, you want to see the villa, you will see it." Whereupon he started at such a pace that they were absolutely dropping in their tracks. They were breathless, upstairs and downstairs, and goodness knows what all.

He had never heard of the Sitwell family, Tommy hadn't, didn't know anything about them at all. But after he'd seen this and met this remarkable man, and realized what a genius he was--because he evidently was for planning, he was just absolutely fantastic--he rushed to try to find his book and he looked and looked. He [Sitwell] had written this book called On the Making of Gardens. It's just a marvelous tiny little book. Tommy finally found it and read it.

He had it, when I first knew Tommy, he had that and he always prized it so highly. I wasn't able to understand it really as clearly in those days, but I have read it many times since and it's just been perfectly extraordinary. (Of course, then I'd have read all the Sitwell's books, too.) Later it was lost; somebody borrowed it or something, anyway, it was gone, a most terrible thing.

Church: Then one time after the war we were in London; we were staying with some friends down in Chelsea or somewhere like that, a darling old house. I went out one afternoon to where there were a few little shops clustered together to get something for tea. I never saw such a sight in my life; the windows where ordinarily you'd see all sorts of delicious pastries, everything just looked as if it were made out of cardboard, it was just too awful. But I finally came on this one place that had something sort of good and right beside it was a book shop that looked like a house, you know. That's the way they are, English bookshops, like your own library or what you hope your library looks like.

I went in and I said, "You don't have Sir George Sitwell's book about gardens?" The man said, "Well, it was here a while ago. I'll just go and look." He went into the back and brought out one. So I returned with that book and the tea!

Riess: How nice. That's a good story.

And certainly if Tommy has good experiences just going ahead and visiting and seeing what he wants and not worrying about it, that's great!

Church: Oh, absolutely. And he's seen some of the most marvelous things that most people haven't seen.

Riess: So, to get back, he hopped out of the car at Pasatiempo and went in and met Marion Hollins.

Church: Yes. And then they had quite a conference and when he came back to get in the car he said, "Well, she's made me an offer." And that was his first offer I guess. So he talked about it and he said that he had to do a little figuring about it, but he thought it would be a good idea because it would enable him to open his own office. That's what he very much wanted to do and probably he wouldn't have had the money to do it for some time.

14) First Pasatiempo Houses

Riess: Did the offer at that point include the house down there?

Church: No, we were to build a house. We had to scrounge around and get the money. I guess she did loan him some of it, I've forgotten. Anyway, that house cost \$9,000 all told, with an awful lot of the furniture built in.

Riess: Where did you first live?

Church: We stayed in Oakland where we had a little tiny house that Tommy had had before we were married [256 28th St.]. We continued to live there, but the house at Pasatiempo went up in less than a year. Things went forward very quickly I would say.

After this was all established, Marion paid him a salary and anything that he made on his own was deducted from that. That's the way it was in the beginning. It may not have been in the end, I don't remember.

Riess: She worked that out then on the assumption that he would be occupied full time down there?

Church: Yes, while the thing was getting established and getting started and various houses were getting built--nothing was built you see at that time--she would pay him to make it worth his while. Then as soon as he got more and more work and was needed less by her, why then they would readjust it.

Riess: Was your house one of the first houses to go up then?

Church: Yes, I think ours was about--let's see, hers had been started and the Howe's house was also started and the MacKenzie's. [Alistair MacKenzie designed the Pasatiempo Golf Course] Yes, I believe ours was the fourth.

Riess: And they were all the work of William Wurster?

Church: Yes.

Riess: Well, then how does Clarence Tantau fit into all that?

Church: Well, Marion had known him in Pebble Beach because he'd done a lot of work over there. He was oh! what a charming man. And what a good architect! He was just absolutely terrific, a very great friend of ours.

Riess: Very different from Wurster?

Church: Oh completely. Traditional, everything understated. If you don't go too far in any direction I think you're much better off really in the long run because it's just a few geniuses that can make a soaring thing. Look at what building has become today, it's just so tragic. Don't you think it's ghastly?

Riess: Yes, I think you are right. You can see where people have tried to be new and it always shows.

Church: Oh boy does it show. And I don't want people to copy. I mean I'm not feeling that that's necessary certainly.

15) The Gregory Farmhouse, Mrs. Gregory, and Mrs. Ellis

Riess: Well, when you think that those were the days when the Gregory farmhouse was considered to be something new, though, and that's such a satisfactory kind of old thing.

Church: And it wasn't really new. It's one of the more traditional of Bill's things. But it really has the spark of genius. Also that house shows another wonderful thing: It shows the cooperation of the architect and the client and Mrs. Ellis. Elizabeth Ellis was a very, very remarkable woman, very creative.

Riess: But how was she involved?

Church: Well, because she was a very great friend of Mrs. Gregory's. They spent endless time those two women down there, just pacing it out and doing a tremendous job. I think Bill always gave them full marks for that house.

Originally Mrs. Gregory had asked Henry Howard to do the plans for it. He was working in his father's office [John Galen Howard] in those days here in San Francisco. He was a very gifted draftsman and so on, but I'd never felt that he was the great creative person--there was no question that he wasn't. The plans he did--I've seen them--for that early house were just traditional, early California stucco, lots of upkeep.

Mrs. Gregory didn't want any of that. She wanted the house to sleep 20 people and that whole house was built for \$10,000. (Of course, it has no heat.) The lumber--she insisted on getting the green lumber, and the green lumber in those days was, let's say, half the cost of the other, I don't know because I don't remember anything about it. As the lumber shrank there now are cracks between every single **p**anel, but it's so beautiful!

Riess: Did she, or Bill, know that it was going to be beautiful or was that an economy on her part?

Church: Well, both. She was very economical. She was a very economical woman in some ways and she had an amazing background. Well, just too much to go into that; it was just that she was a most remarkable woman and so was Elizabeth Ellis--from totally different backgrounds.

Riess: How come nobody ever mentions Mr. Gregory or Mr. Ellis?

Church: Well, Mr. Ellis was worlds older than his wife and by the time that we knew her, and she was more active, he was an invalid. He was an invalid for many years. I really never knew him myself. And Mr. Gregory was a very hard-working San Francisco lawyer. His mind was just like that (gestures).

Mrs. Gregory lived in this marvelous atmosphere two or three feet off the ground. You know she used to have the most fantastic poetry evenings. She really had the closest thing, she and Mrs. Ellis between them, they really had salons in Berkeley. They had all the intellectuals from the University.

Mrs. Ellis lived in one of Mr. Howard's houses originally, a house that he had built for somebody else. She bought that. Mrs. Gregory's house was built by Mr. Howard for the Gregorys. Mrs. Ellis rented it when Mrs. Gregory moved out of it and moved over here to be near her grandchildren. Her younger daughter had died and left five small children, so she moved over here to be near them until the husband re-married. Then she became ill and continued to live in that house and died there. She never went back to Greenwood Terrace. Meanwhile Mrs. Ellis was there.

Riess: Oh that's how it works, I see.

Church: And then Bill bought it. He finally managed to get it, to buy it. Mrs. Ellis was going to move or I don't know what. She died very suddenly--I think she was still in that house. I can't remember exactly.

But the Gregory house [on Greenwood Terrace] in a way was rather like Mrs. Gregory's farm. There were certain of the same principles applied to it: the main room was beautiful and the front door and the trees, and the library was seemly; the rest of the house was unbelievable! Upstairs there'd be walls almost like paper. And the minute you entered, there was a door that led upstairs. In the old days, you'd think this was the servants [entrance], you know.

Riess: And this, you suppose, is what she asked John Galen Howard for?

Church: I have no idea about the plan of that. What she wanted to do was to create that living room and those beautiful windows. I'm sure that must have cost the world and maybe that was all the money that she wanted to spend on the house. Then she wanted the trees to come up through the house. That was very unusual in those days. And she wanted the beautiful view. They looked right out all the way over to San Francisco. Nothing impeded the view. Oh, she was a very original woman. She had absolutely the most marvelous ideas.

Riess: She started out in the east also?

Church: No, she was born in Oakland, or born in Stockton or somewhere like that. Her mother was a schoolteacher. She was the only child. Her mother was very much older when she was born. The father had left the mother and had gone to the Islands and lived in Honolulu. Years later some of the family went over there and met him. I guess Don Gregory had met him. Mrs. Hardy was a very, very fierce dominating terrific woman. She inspired this daughter with every high-minded and creative and so-on thing that could possibly be. She [Mrs. Gregory] certainly did pervade that in Berkeley.

Riess: She sounds like the perfect client, one with really strong wishes.

Church: Tommy always felt that. He used to say to people, "What are your ideas?" I remember one girl said to him, "But I don't have any ideas." And he said, "Then I can't do your garden." [Laughter] He said, "I have to have something to go on. You've got to give me some clue."

16) Betsy and Tommy's Houses

Riess: I think so often people think that the only way to treat an artist is to let him create.

Church: That was true in the old days. Way back I remember hearing much older architects say, "Those were the days," when the house would be commissioned and the family would pack their trunks and they'd go on a world tour and they wouldn't come back until the house was finished. Of course, I want to live in my house while it's being done.

I didn't understand anything about architecture or anything when this [Pasatiempo] house was done. Bill and Tommy handed me these plans and I guess they thought I understood because they didn't explain anything to me. So it was all just one surprise after another. But later, when we moved into this house, and we began sort of working on

Church: it, we always had somebody that was working here and I was right here and I could see them doing these things. I never would build a house again without being right there.

Riess: Because of the excitement of it?

Church: Yes, it's very exciting and then why should you go downtown, come home, and be surprised and find that you've got something that you didn't want.

Riess: You need to be there because hideous things can happen?

Church: Yes and then I think also it's nice to be involved. This house [2626 Hyde] shows, well, there are several battlegrounds that perhaps you don't see with the naked eye, but the fight was there. I think it shows a perfectly wonderful quality that it never would have had. Of course, I'm not taking any credit for that, because Tommy did it all. The fun we had, I would never give that up for anything on earth! And after the last nail went in, the carpenter would take himself off, and I'd be so forlorn. I'd be absolutely deprived. I hate to have you see it looking like it does today.

Riess: I'm just loving the pink vista [hallway] in one direction and the green in the other.

Church: Well, I think it's beautiful. Tommy did all the colors.

Riess: I think in our first interview you said you were never much attracted by the Pasatiempo life.

Church: Well, I'm not a sportswoman. I don't do any of the sports. I'm very fond of swimming, but in those days there was no pool so I couldn't swim. I did ride. Marion Hollins had a horse that I used to ride quite a bit down there. But I was always very thrilled when we were coming up to San Francisco. I didn't belong in that setting. There were an awful lot of people that came over from Pebble Beach and they were all very interested in sports. That was what they concentrated on.

Riess: What was the prospect? How long did you think that you and Tommy would be down there?

Church: I really never thought. Never crossed my mind at all.

Riess: I know, I understand that.

Church: Do you? I think it's pretty awful. I certainly wasn't looking very far into the future. Tommy was. Well, I guess that what I did think about was getting to San Francisco.

Church: You know, when we were growing up in Berkeley, almost all the girls that were close and grew up together on Piedmont Avenue, our one idea was to get into San Francisco. Of course, once I got older I wanted to go much farther afield. But we all said that we'd like to get over to San Francisco and live over there. It seemed a terrific place. Most of us did come here.

I never cared for even faintly suburbs. Oakland I always thought was awful. In fact, before I was married I used to say, "There are two places I'm never going to live. One of them is Oakland and the other is Santa Cruz." [Laughter] And first I went to Oakland and then I came to Santa Cruz. But I couldn't have lived in Pasatiempo, my word, I should say not!

Riess: Did people come down much?

Church: Yes, we used to entertain a lot. We had people come and stay with us.

Riess: They probably thought it was thrilling to be down there.

Church: Yes, I think people did like it a lot, people that lived in San Francisco and that liked sports. Then little by little we had lots of friends; some that we'd always known came to build houses there, but not to live permanently. The only people that were living permanently were ourselves and then people that were really sort of connected in those days with Pasatiempo. Marion, of course, was often away. She'd come and go.

17) The Garden at Pasatiempo

Church: Tommy finished the garden way ahead of the house. The garden was perfectly beautiful down there, beautiful! Absolutely lovely.

Riess: Were there things about the Pasatiempo garden that were a kind of essence of a Thomas Church garden?

Church: Yes, I imagine there are several things that remained like cornerstones. It was a piece of property that was bordered on the road so he created some privacy by trees along the road and a wall against which were the flowerborders. I remember that as being perfectly fascinating. I never had a flower border. That was adjacent to a brick court that led into the house. That was really very pretty as I recall. Then in the back it was natural. There was a big terrace off the bedroom that ran along the house like this [demonstrates]. Then the bank went down;

Church: there was a rushing river in the winter and it was all wild azaleas. Of course, that had nothing to do with Tommy, but it was very beautiful. It was simple, but I imagine it was sort of a beginning of things that he thought.

18) Tommy's Way of Finding the Key to the Solution

Riess: That Pasatiempo garden was his first own garden since the one on the Arlington in Berkeley.

Church: I guess so.

That reminds me of the other day when we went over to Berkeley. There's a very nice physiotherapist that Tommy met at the hospital, and he's very interested in gardening. He's very cute. He invited us over there. One day he told Tommy that he was very upset about his garden. He wanted to improve it and so forth. So would Tommy come over and help him? It was one of the early times that Tommy was back from the hospital and I just marveled that he could do it.

It was a very hot day, and the house was in north Berkeley [San Luis Road], right near Indian Rock, a rather hilly area and a typical garden. I remember in my childhood we used to be taken all through that area on walks and picnics and you know there's not one piece that isn't higher than the other. And I thought, "Oh, he'll never be able to do this." [negotiate the hillside]

But they had a little gazebo that they had built in the back garden. Tommy sat in that and in about two minutes he was just doing these plans for these two men and they got started immediately. They just love it. They're perfectly crazy about it. He [one of the men] comes by and he brings the oxygen tanks or he comes and fixes the machine for Tommy and then Tommy gives him a little rundown.* And we're talking about going over there another time. He wants us to come again.

I was so fascinated because when I looked at it I thought, "Oh, why do they bother? There's nothing they can get out of this at all. It's just too awful. And they have a lot of stuff growing and everything, why don't they just settle down with that?"

So many times in the past we'd go to these places and the woman would say, "Well, what'll I do?" I'd know just how she felt. I would think that the thing she should do would be to do nothing. Sit down and turn her back on the whole thing. But Tommy just immediately sees the simple little tiny thing.

*Everett Stanley

Church: People have told me so often that the simple thing that he sees is the key to the whole thing and just changes their feeling about everything. I have boxes--I have answered very few of them I'm ashamed to say--but there are boxes down at the office of letters that people have written about gardens that Tommy has done for them, some of them 40 years ago. Unbelievable! his rapport! But that's what he concentrated on; he never was interested in doing anything except an individual thing. And that's why at the end he was just about the only person that did it. It's tragic that he should be stricken like this because work was just piling in like I don't know what.

Riess: And there isn't anybody?

Church: Absolutely nobody. He had this marvelous man that worked with him, Walter Guthrie, who is perfectly wonderful and who, of course, had to get another job and does go in on certain things from time to time, but it almost never works out because he worked with Tommy. He worked under Tommy. He executed, he was just like a right arm. And you never can set that loose on its own, or very rarely. There are several people that worked for Tommy who had very active practices and do very well, but none of them have just that thing. I think I'm perfectly justified in saying that.

Riess: Well, it sounds like that thing had very much to do with how he worked with the clients.

Church: That's it.

Riess: And yet these people who worked for him had a chance to observe it.

Church: Well, it wasn't in them, it came from the outside, but it has to come from the inside, that creative push. Well, I'm just hoping that Tommy is going to get better so that he really can go on. He's working on it. I've never seen anybody work so hard in a perfectly calm way, just the way he's always worked. It's just calm and understated but he's just got his mind absolutely set on making it.

19) Floyd Mick

Riess: What is the Floyd Mick story?

Church: Well, Floyd Mick employed Tommy.

Riess: Floyd Mick was actually a landscape architect?

Church: Yes, and I believe he's still extant and I think he's still working. He must be well into his 80s.

Riess: Did he start out in Santa Cruz?

Church: He worked around Piedmont and Oakland in the twenties. That was when Tommy got summer jobs with him, when he would come home from college. Those three years that he was at Harvard he came home each summer, I believe, and he always had this job with Mick.

Riess: Was Mick good?

Church: Well, he was pretty good I guess. I don't really remember too much about his gardens. My memory is they were rather seemly. And there was sort of a Piedmont atmosphere that was rather attractive. The people had a little more money than they did in Berkeley.

Riess: And Tommy was doing the construction end of things, or was he doing drawing?

Church: I think he did some designing, I'm not sure.

Riess: I'll tell you why I'm asking, because I've seen correspondence between Mick and Wurster that I'll read to you:

Mick writes to Wurster [Aug. 4, 1930]: "Mr. Church has advised me of his intention to leave my employ provided certain negotiations which he has underway with some of my clients and prospective clients will assure him of satisfactory return for his services in a business of his own. These negotiations have been developing while he was receiving a salary from me, and I have chosen to accept his resignation unconditionally. His connection with me has in fact already been severed."

Now, that's neatly worded.

Church: Well, I imagine that by that time Tommy had actually severed connections. I know that Mick was very angry with him, or at least I heard that from people. He [Tommy] never said anything much about it.

Riess: Wurster [Aug. 8, 1930] says: "Mr. Church immediately explained that it would go through your office, as he was working for you. I asked that his name appear on the drawings. As far as came to my knowledge, he was scrupulous in your behalf at all times. An offer was made directly to Mr. Church which came, I feel sure, as a great surprise to us both. It was quite clearly a proposal from my clients based upon their need of having someone on the ground and their feeling that Mr. Church was the man for such a position."

Church: That's such a wonderful letter of Bill's! No wonder Tommy just revered him and loved him so much.

Tommy always ignored that. You know, many people take terrific exception about that business of the various architects. There are these famous incidents in the history of jobs being taken by somebody from the office to their own office. But as I say the client is perfectly free to say who they want. There's no law against that certainly. Tommy never paid any attention to it one way or another.

Riess: I see. And the suggestion is that Tommy was taking clients from here, or from Santa Cruz?

Church: Well, I think maybe they were people here. But of course that always happens, you see, when somebody leaves, because people always follow the person they've been working with. And after all, the client has a free choice. They can stay or they can leave. But that happens a great deal. He makes it sound as if it were very sinister, but it isn't. It's very common.

Riess: Well, I guess because the letterhead was Mick's with a Santa Cruz address, I had thought that Mick was the landscape architect originally.

Church: No, no. He never had anything to do with Marion, no.

Riess: Wurster said: "The Santa Cruz work was brought to your organization because of my friendship and admiration for Mr. Church."

Church: Tommy had to operate through Mick's office. He wasn't established when he first spoke with Marion Hollins. And I suppose it took a little time to get it organized. This makes it sound--but as I said, this has happened for 45 years.

Riess: About the eventual break with Marion Hollins. Was that really a break or did that just kind of dissolve finally?

Church: No, no it was not. There was never anything unpleasant in any way. We remained great friends. Tommy always adored her and credited her, which certainly is true, with having enabled him to, at a very low moment, open his own office. He might not have been able to do that for some time.

No, it became obvious that property wasn't being sold and things instead of going up were really going down. It was very unfortunate. It wasn't at all what her dream had been, largely due to the Depression. It combined with, which is another very fortunate thing in our past, the urge to come up here. He early saw that the place for him to have an office was not in the country.

Church: People for years have said to Tommy, "We don't understand why you don't have an office in Burlingame or some place like that." But you see, San Francisco was the center. It wouldn't be so true now, but it was in those days. It was the place that people thought of to reach him.

20) Floyd Gerow, and Bob Glasner

Riess: How did Tommy find Floyd Gerow?

Church: Tommy found him at Pasatiempo. He was then just practically out of school. He was eager and hard-working and like all of Tommy's people, he just devoted himself to Tommy. He was just so dependable and so terrific always from the very beginning. I suppose there were people who didn't like him because there are always people that don't like somebody. But I think most people realized what a treasure he was.

At one time he was a very active contractor and did almost all of Tommy's jobs. I think when he didn't get the job, it would be when people didn't want to spend that much money. Tommy always felt badly because he felt that they then got something that was less and paid less for it. And that they might live to regret it. I don't know that they did.

Riess: So in those cases they went out and found their own contractor then?

Church: Yes, or they put it out for bids or something. It's always put out for bids, I think, and then usually Floyd's bid was high. But for very good reason because the work was superb.

Riess: Tommy would counsel people just to take Floyd?

Church: Yes, he would hope that they would.

Riess: Of course after a while a contractor can't even keep up with the number of jobs that the landscape architect can generate.

Church: Yes. Tommy almost always had the most remarkable people that would just come out of the blue. You don't know where they came from. For instance, the man that has been doing his work recently is a man called Bob Glasner, the most amazing character, who I think heard about Tommy. I don't know how he came to know him. I think he really sort of tried to get in touch with him or something.

Church: Bob is absolutely remarkable! Now he has so much work; you know naturally he doesn't work on Tommy's things any more, but he works for everybody that ever knew Tommy in the old days because he's so perfect. Every now and then he comes over here and fixes our garden.

Riess: Well, I guess Tommy trained a lot of these people also.

Church: He not only trained them. Yes, Tommy was absolutely marvelous at that. And he didn't do it in any obvious way; he never pointed or showed them how to do anything. I think they just got it by observing him and seeing how he worked. That's what they've told me.

Riess: The one year that he taught at Berkeley he was teaching the construction courses.

Church: Was he? That's interesting.

Up until a very short time ago he would always be there with the planting, he would always be there with any tailoring of any of the shrubs or the trees or anything. That was his favorite thing to do.

Up in the north, where he'd go twice a year, these two women would get their teams of workmen, and Tommy would just be out there with them.* I think they learned from seeing him. Maybe they also learned that they didn't want to do that. It was too much.

*Mrs. Corydon Wagner, Tacoma, and her sister, Mrs. Prentiss Bloedel, Bainbridge Island.

Interview #3 - May 5, 1977

21) The Garden Tour - Organizers

Church: [Talking about the tour of Thomas Church-designed gardens held previous Sunday] It was really perfectly marvelous. It had been organized by the Stanford Committee for Arts. They'd been working on it for about a year and a half. You know, it couldn't be something done at the last minute; the people wanted to feel that their gardens were looking the best.

They didn't have room for more than about 150 people and I think they had to turn down quite a lot of people, because so many wanted to come. There were people that joined the thing [Committee for the Arts] just in order to be able to come on the tour. Oh, some people were there I hadn't seen for I don't know how many years, really, about 30 or 40, maybe more.

Riess: And some of the gardens were gardens from the thirties.

Church: Very old, from the thirties, several. One or two of them I hadn't been in since the days when they were being done. I hadn't seen them since. They'd all matured in the most beautiful way, of course; they were far more beautiful now than they had been then.

Riess: Who selected the gardens?

Church: Well, there were two girls that were very active in it. One is an awfully nice girl that we've met recently. Her name is Carolyn Caddes.

Riess: Oh, yes, I met her, the photographer.

Church: Of course you have, yes. She appealed to Tommy one time some years ago and said that they got this house, but they didn't have a cent for the garden, and they had to have a Tommy Church garden, so couldn't they do a trade? (Now people are trading again as they did in the Depression all the time, but that was about the first time I heard of that.)

Church: He said, "Yes," as he always did, and he became very involved in it. It's perfectly charming. It's right in Palo Alto, but it's one of those suburban-looking streets in Palo Alto. I think it was an Eichler House, but of course completely altered by having this setting. It really is most attractive.

So she was very active in the planning of this. She's a very dynamic girl. And then the other girl who did a great deal was the Reinhardt girl. She's married to Paul Reinhardt. They live down in Palo Alto. He's an opthamologist, and he's the brother of Fred Reinhardt, who was our ambassador to Italy, who is an old friend. The Reinhardt family were an old, old Berkeley family. Dr. Reinhardt was the--

Riess: The University physician, wasn't he?

Church: Yes, he was the University physician and also he delivered all the babies along Piedmont Avenue [laughter] amongst which I was one. I said this to Paul the other day and he said, "You're the second person today that's told me that they were brought into the world by my father." He was an awfully nice man and he died tragically young. His wife became Dr. Aurelia Reinhardt, who was the president of Mills. And the boys were brought up at Mills actually until they reached a certain age. Then she sent them away to school.

When we were in Rome one winter, at the American Academy, in the early sixties, Fred had shortly before that become the Ambassador and we saw quite a lot of him. Fred and Tommy were both in the hospital in Rome, the famous hospital there. They had sort of adjoining porches and so they got to know each other quite well.

Then Tommy helped Fred. He [Fred] bought some property on the coast above Rome and built a house. Tommy advised him a little bit about the setting and everything. Alas, it was too late to site it properly because it was already there when Tommy got there.

Riess: Well, let me see. We got far afield briefly. The wife of Paul Reinhardt, then, was one of the organizers.

Church: I didn't know all the people by any means, or all the houses, or all the gardens, but I did know a few.

22) The Henderson House, and the Backs of Envelopes

Riess: The house and garden I associate with the early thirties is the Henderson house. Now certainly lots of other things were happening during the thirties.

Church: Oh, that house was one of Bill's really charming houses. It was a little French country house, very much like the Smith house in Berkeley, the one on Russell, which is really evidently beautifully kept today. It's a jewel really. It's just one of my favorite houses! [1812 Russell St. Designed in 1927.]

But the entrance [to 1934 Henderson house] was nothing. And she had a beautiful Chinese figure that her mother-in-law had given her. Tommy felt that that should be so very eloquently placed. So he did all the lovely clipped boxwood, and it was quite formal. I don't know what it's like now, but it was just beautiful. Then I think later he did the garden in the back, helped her develop that. She always had been interested in gardening.

And in those days when all the young people were laying their own bricks because it was so costly, I remember we had a couple of days when we had big Sunday lunches [at the Henderson's] and everybody helped to lay the brick [in the back garden].

Riess: Really?

Church: Yes, they did that quite a bit in those days when everybody was economizing. Nobody had any money.

Riess: Did Tommy start out doing small places and work up?

Church: Oh, he did very small places in the very beginning, because nobody spent any money. People are always coming up to us and telling us, "Oh, yes. We only paid \$50 for that plan," or something like that. It's just absolutely fantastic! But even the very rich were poor, you know, in the Depression.

Of course, the people like the Walkers [Mrs. Henderson's parents] hadn't settled all that property, that lumber property up in the north. They had potential wealth, but they didn't have actual wealth. Of course now they're frightfully rich.

Riess: You talk about a little \$50 garden that Tommy might have done during the thirties--were there any that were just kind of scribbled on the back of an envelope and given to people?

Church: Yes, I think there were quite a few. As a matter of fact, a man came up to me one time and he said, "Why Tommy came down here and he just drew the thing on the back of an envelope!" And I said, "Well, I hope you still have that envelope. It's worth purest gold." [Laughing] He looked quite amazed. "Well, I'll look for it in my desk."

Riess: That's terrible of you! Really, a drawing on the back of an envelope would depend on excellent follow-through in construction.

23) Grateful Clients, and Architects

Church: Tommy never told me anything that went wrong. He always had a very bright approach to everything. I'm perfectly certain that there were many things that didn't work out and that were worrying to him and that he was discouraged about, but I never knew anything about it, it never showed in his personality in any way. He had some kind of a ebulliency that surmounted just about everything.

Riess: Yes, because despite the fact that clients were practically to a man happy, there must have been a man in there that wasn't.

Church: He never had to my knowledge a really unpleasant experience, anything that would be in any way serious or really unpleasant. I never heard of him as being let go in the middle of anything or anything like that. Now maybe he was but I never heard that.

Now this Sunday [referring to garden tour], it was just almost too much, just person after person. I began to get so groggy after a few hours. Just endless people coming up and saying, "Now please tell Tommy that we just will never get over being grateful to him. We think about him every day." Of course, naturally this period that he is going through has an emotional impact on people. I realize that. But it's absolutely fantastic!

I've never heard of anybody that was as universally--now maybe I'm just highly prejudiced, but I always wanted to see things as they were. I think life has good sides and bad sides and I've always thought I'd rather see it. I don't want to think that something is some wonderful way, if it isn't. But particularly, of course, since Tommy's been sick, but even before that, I hardly believe the things that people have said about him--

Church: People have had great big projects going that they thought they'd sort of do themselves or something, I don't know what, but they got in over their heads. And they'd call me up and say, "Can you intercede for us because we just...." Oh, they'd say they were about to get a divorce, they couldn't stand it, their husbands didn't agree with this and that and they couldn't go any further and "Would Tommy just come in on it?" He was a marvelous catalyst! He would come in on a job where the people were just having a fit over the architect, and any number of people have told me that they never could have gone through the whole thing if Tommy hadn't.

Of course what he did would help the architect. (The architects were very loathe to admit that. Now some of them do, but some of them never have.) Gardner Dailey was one of the very first to say that Tommy just had to be gotten in. He never would do a house where the people hadn't already employed Tommy to look at the property. He wouldn't do it. Gardner felt, and Tommy also feels, that his site planning is one of his great contributions.

You know, it's a very traumatic thing to build; the bigger the house, the more traumatic. I said for years after observing all these turmoils that people have gone through, "I never would want to build another house." Fortunately, when we did build that house, I didn't know one thing that was going on so I didn't understand any of it so I wasn't really a part of it at all. But today I'd have things I wanted and I wouldn't be able to get them. I'd be as mad as a hornet.

Tommy was able to bridge chasms and make people happy. And as a rule the architect realized how lucky he was. (I don't usually talk this way but I've always said I was going to write a book, "My Life Amongst the Architects," because I've seen so much. It's a very personal thing. I mean it's much more than an art that's superimposed, it's an art that involves all these people. Besides that, it has to be practical.)

Riess: Well, Tommy must have had a lot of good grace that he could come onto the scene and get off the scene and leave the architect's ego intact.

Church: Not only that, the architects just cried for him. Certain ones became absolutely his best friends, and just absolutely adore him.

Riess: When you say that you were groggy with the feelings that people were generating about their love for Tommy, do you think then that it was the personality, or was it their passion for the extraordinary gardens that they had been living in all of these years?

Church: At the office are just packing cases full of letters that have come to Tommy during the last couple of years that he's been so sick. Several people have written really perfectly beautiful letters just like a poem. And of course the garden is a very living thing. They're in it everyday. A house can be, well, not a prison, but it can confine you with all sorts of problems that are attendant on it. And you can open a door to your garden and you can go out, breathe the air and see things growing and feel that that's just the way it should be. I think it is just marvelous that so often that was the way it worked.

24) Houses and Gardens on the Tour

Riess: What was the variety of gardens that you did see [on May 1st tour]?

Church: Well, there were some that were very old. They all had almost the same quality of rightness. They all seemed right.

Someone asked me what I thought about the houses, a girl very devoted to Tommy, who has a very beautiful house. I looked a great deal at the houses, too, and I suddenly thought, really I didn't see any houses that seemed exactly the same category as the gardens.

Riess: You mean category of rightness?

Church: Yes. We weren't invited in to many of the houses. There were two or three that I knew. There was one that I had been in many years ago and I was delighted to see it again. It was very original, it just belonged especially to these people. But then the garden did not particularly belong to these people nor to the house. It was very seemly, but it just caused the house to settle into the landscape and belong where it was. As you looked at it, you couldn't imagine that anybody could have done anything else yet it must have been quite a struggle to achieve what he did. That was fascinating! It belonged to a Stanford professor, Robert Bush. [In Gardens are for People, p. 30]

I forget who did that house.* There were very few houses that were actually done by the architects. Well, as I say, there were two Gardner Daileys, I think. We didn't see any that were done by Bill. A couple of them are quite intricate.

Today I think architecture has begun to change and change vitaly. People just can't have what they want. There was a period when people had the money and they had all these desires. They could have anything

*Anshen and Allen, on a modified Eichler home.

Church: they wanted. If they said they wanted a room out this way or room here or whatever, they could have it if it would work out. Therefore, sometimes that caused a sort of a diffusion. Most of the houses were on one story, on one floor. I like a house that comes together sort of. I don't like a house that just goes on and on and on.

Riess: The on and on and on sounds like California ranch style.

Church: That's it. Oh, yes, there was a Cliff May house*--although I used to like many things about his houses, he had a wonderful sort of a domestic scale that I thought was awfully nice in the early days. This was the only thing he's done up here other than the Sunset building. That we saw--well we just drove by--and of course, that Sunset garden is perfectly beautiful, out of this world! I'd forgotten it.

Tommy got that job through Cliff May, I think. The Lanes, when they came out here in the thirties, I remember we met them early because he immediately began to publish Tommy. You know, he published Tommy before anybody else did. I think there was a thing of Tommy's every month, some tiny little thing or a little picture or something like that.

I remember the Lanes had a place near Santa Cruz. Even before we had our place that we have now [in Scott's Valley], after we left Pasatiempo, we used to go down there a great deal. That was the place that we went when we went out of town. We saw the Lanes quite a bit.

Then they envisioned this thing, compound [for Sunset publications] really, in Menlo Park, and they got Cliff May because at that moment he was sort of the essence of the California ranch style.

Riess: On that scale, from what I've seen of it, it seems really good.

Church: Well, it is good, it really is. And in the very beginning I think he was awfully good, I really do. Of course, they keep it up beautifully.

That's a big thing in visiting the gardens, whether or not they've been beautifully kept up. All of these had. The people were all very interested in the gardens. For instance, some people called Little [Carol and Dick Little]. I never had met them before. They were rather young people. I don't believe they built the house. It was a big rambling house, one of the ones particularly that I didn't care very much for. I didn't go inside it.

But the garden was perfectly beautiful. It was all flat. And it was hemmed by beautiful trees, quite old. The greenery was very lovely. It was almost like the feeling in the Northwest that there's

*John and Gail Whelan, Atherton.

Church: this wonderful background to everything. And the entrance was absolutely beautiful; that must have been in Tommy's Hawthorne period because he used to plant Hawthorne trees a lot especially in entrances. I think they were pink Hawthornes, really in full flower. It was perfectly beautiful.

Then the flower gardens and bed parts and all of that were very beautiful. Then this huge lawn, and there was a bird cage with little birds, wild birds, and very attractive seating places. Wherever you felt you would like to sit, there were little benches. And let's see, there was a swimming pool. I've forgotten where that was. The swimming pool and the tennis court, all of that was sort of on the perimeters of it.

Riess: Vast?

Church: It was vast. I heard several people say, "Well, this is the end of an era." That certainly had crossed my mind. Because, you know, they wouldn't be able to do it. Of course today, I don't know how they're going to keep the lawn so beautiful and emerald green [because of drought]. It's very tragic to think about it. But that was lovely.

Let me think. What other things.

Riess: What were the Gardner Dailey houses like? Were they modern-looking?

Church: They were the modern period which I like a little bit less than I did his earlier things.

Riess: So that would be the fifties?

Church: No, the one that I think of particularly was done in the thirties. Tommy did the garden. The garden is just beautiful. I wasn't too crazy about the house. I didn't think it was too unusual. I'd forgotten that we used to go there quite a bit, but I hadn't been there for ages.

Riess: It would be possible to do a garden to really distract the eye from the house and mask the house.

Church: Well, I think Tommy did that a great deal. Elizabeth Gordon, a great friend of ours, the brilliant editor of House Beautiful for so long-- (though I always have preferred the format and superficially just riffling through the pages of House and Garden, at least I'm talking about some years ago when she was the editor of House Beautiful and she had the forward-thinking ideas and so forth. I knew her quite well because we traveled together quite a bit and we remained very good friends)--she always said that Tommy saved so many houses. She said,

Church: "If only architects realized how Tommy embellished their houses and really saved them from disaster." She said that to me many times in no uncertain terms.

Riess: New houses?

Church: Yes, houses that were being built, or an old house. Oh, that was one of his great specialties. Somebody would buy an old house and they'd say, "What in heaven's name are we going to do?" And he really was just perfectly marvelous at it.

25) "No One Worked Like He Worked"

Riess: When you talked about Carolyn Caddes in the beginning, and her proposing the trade, you said, "Tommy said Yes, like he always does." What do you mean by that?

Church: Well, I mean he would always agree instantly to something like that because it was sort of an inspiration to him.

Riess: And so you're implying that he wasn't all businessman?

Church: No, he was not. Well, I guess he was a good enough businessman, but the first consideration always was the job, how the job was going to be and the client and the best that could possibly be gotten out of it.

I don't think anybody that I've ever heard of in my experience or any of the people that we've ever known has ever worked the way Tommy worked. I've never seen such a worker in my life. Everybody says that. Nothing, nothing was spared.

Riess: In hours?

Church: All night long, and if something would go wrong, he'd just be there. I mean he'd just have come home from the deep Peninsula or something and then he'd go back again. He'd be down in Santa Cruz. At least that's my impression. I don't know. Of course, as I say, I don't know everything. And there are probably people that didn't like him, but I don't know who they were.

Riess: Well, I talked one day to Roger Sturtevant--

Church: --Dear, old friend.

Riess: Yes, and Donn Emmons and Theodore Bernardi, who all sat around the table reminiscing and everytime I asked a question about, "How did you find time to do this," how or why or what or anything, the answer was always that they were so devoted and particularly Tommy and Bill. There was no question of hours, none of these ordinary considerations.

Church: Never, never.

Tommy has always said, from the very beginning, that Bill's plans, when he was able, before he wasn't able to draw, were so fantastic. He said that he has never, never seen such plans. From the very beginning he just reacted so to that, that it was really a fantastic thing.

Riess: What were some of the differences then between working with Bill and working with Gardner Dailey?

Church: Well, I never heard him say specifically about Gardner's plans, but knowing Gardner, I imagine they would be pretty detailed, too, giving a very good idea of what he envisioned. Of course Gardner, you know, had been a landscape architect. He started out that way. So he had quite a knowledge which lots of the architects in those early days didn't have.

The old architects before the Depression were trained to place the house and make the terraces and make the driveways and all of that, but the ones that came later, that really was sort of taken away from them.

Tommy really, I think--everybody says this so I guess it's true--kind of influenced the movement back towards having the landscape architect and the architect work together so that the house had some connection with the land in other words. As I said before, I've heard Tommy say many times that he felt his real contribution was setting the house, a thing that is not always very well observed.

And California was a place where anything grew. It was way behind in design, California was. But it was a wonderful place for young people starting out because there wasn't very much. The great estates were few and far between and mostly in the south really, Santa Barbara as I've said.

26) A Far View of Berkeley

Church: Of course growing up in Berkeley I think that I just love the originality. We had this Russian woman that lived with us for a long time [at 2626 Hyde Street]. She had to flee China when the Communists came. She landed with us and she lived with us for 12 years. She was a wonderful human being. She had had one of those amazing Russian backgrounds. She was well-educated and had great taste. We spoke in French, because needless to say I didn't speak Russian. (But in 12 years I could have learned Russian. It makes me so mad to think of it!)

She used to say, "San Francisco--c'est une ville tres originale." Well, now you see, that's just exactly what it is! In that French use, it's more than original; "originale"--it's also a great compliment. That cheered me up so. Because in the early days of living here I used to go down the streets and I'd think, "Oh, dear! Every house is different and one stands out this way and one stands out that way." I was just looking always for the harmonious outside. And I told you about what that man said to me that I think about so often. [See p. 391]

You know, everybody wants to move away from where they grew up, or mostly everybody; then they might want to come back. But when I went out in the world I realized that Berkeley was a very famous place. The University is so great. Places that we'd go, when we'd be introduced to these marvelous people and they'd ask where we came from, if I said Berkeley, why they were just so impressed. And they'd immediately ask if we knew all these professor's families that I really grew up knowing when I was a little girl just realizing they were Professor thus-and-so and not having any idea that they were famous really.

Many of the professors were crazy about Florence in those days. You know they'd have those long sabbaticals and so many of them would go to Florence. The Gayley family was very close to me because they lived across the street and Betty was just about my age. We were friends from babyhood. I can see the Gayleys all setting out now for the great trek across the Continent and on the boat and then they'd eventually land in Florence. Then Betty's letters coming from Florence. Of course, I didn't realize what sort of life she was leading.

When we went to Florence one time someone took us to have lunch at I Tati with Berensen. When we came into the room the first thing he said to me was, "Where do you come from?" I said we came from Berkeley and he said, "Do you know the Clapps?" (That's an old family;

Church: he was a professor.) I said yes, I did know the Clapps. Then he spoke of Professor Gayley and one or two others. It was very amusing. But then that gave you sort of an entree. Apparently if you didn't get the right wavelength with Berensen you were moved down to the end of the table or something.

Riess: That is a perspective on Berkeley. So it was not seen as too "western?"

Church: Not at all!

27) Choosing Books for Gertrude Stein

Church: When I went to Paris and got the job at the library, I was taking the job of a girl who was on a six-month's leave in America. One of her jobs had been dealing with Stein and Toklas. I'd never heard of them.

So they [librarians] said to me, "Now there are these two very distinguished ladies and they're quite different. They have very different tastes. Miss Stein is a very distinguished writer. She's working on this book about Americans. So she wants everything to do with America to be sent to her." (They would spend a lot of time down in the country in this house that they had and we used to send them these books.) The first batch of books I sent came back practically unopened. They didn't want any of those. Then the next batch Miss Stein had read. It took me quite awhile to get on to the things that Miss Stein wanted.

The way we got on in the end, which is so funny, was that one time she came into the library and she said, "I'm going to give a lecture at Cambridge. It's the first time I've ever lectured. I'm going to stay with the Sitwells. It's been arranged. I'm very nervous. When I'm nervous I read detective stories." (She was the first intellectual that I'd heard of that read detective stories. I thought only people with no brains at all read detective stories. I was absolutely staggered.) And she said, "I wonder if you could recommend something."

I said, "Well, I certainly can, particularly as you know San Francisco and you've spoken to me about Chinatown." (She used to ask me if the little Chinese girls were still so pretty and had dark hair that came down--you know, they used to do their hair in the little braids on their ears and wore their costumes. And I said no, I was afraid they didn't do that anymore.)

Church: I said, "There is this series of books, detective stories about San Francisco Chinatown by a man called Sax Rohmer." (It was a Fu Manchu.) And she said, "The very thing!"

So I gave her a whole armload of them. Off she went and she came back and she never forgot that. She said, "That was the greatest thing that could have been done." That introduced her to Sax Rohmer.

Isn't it really killing? Why I just couldn't believe it! I mean the reason I knew Sax Rohmer so well was that I'd had a very gay aunt when I was young whose beau sent her a new Sax Rohmer every time one appeared. We could hardly wait to get our hands on it and read it. So I was very familiar with it but I thought it was only for frivolous, I didn't realize it was an intellectual pursuit.

Riess: What a good story about Gertrude Stein.

Church: Yes, she was quite a marvelous woman. They were quite wonderful, both of those ladies, needless to say.

Tommy met Toklas. He took some wonderful pictures of her. We were all in Paris at one time later on with some people and we looked her up, and we went to call on her and then she involved us in a couple of interesting things. One time when we were all having lunch or dinner or something, Tommy took these pictures of her. They're really quite stunning.

Riess: Where are they?

Church: Oh, they're right here somewhere if I can put my hand on them.

Toklas remembered me and she was very lovely and gracious. By that time she was living all by herself under very tragic circumstances.

We introduced Elizabeth Gordon to Alice. Elizabeth was the one who got Alice's book, The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook, published.

28) Anais Nin, the Jolas, and Transition

Church: I was reading about Anais Nin the other day. In those early days I was such an ignorant and so behind the times. I wasn't with it. I do think she's quite a wonderful writer. I used to see her all the time. I used to see Picasso. I never went to any of Gertrude's soirees or anything like that, but I heard her read several times.

Church: I was invited to hear her read. She'd do that at various times when she'd finish certain things. But I was certainly not one of her inner circle.

Riess: But Anais Nin, that's interesting. Was she known around town?

Church: I wouldn't have dared approach her or anything because she was so exotic and so wierd and of course she was wildly lightyears ahead of me in every way, although I think she's just about my age. But I guess I took a long time to develop. I used to read her writing. In those days I couldn't understand it at all. Of course I didn't get very much out of Gertrude's either, but I didn't read any of her earlier things. I tried to read the contemporary things that she was writing right then.

Anais Nin has written some beautiful books. She's written one of the really great books on Mexico.

Riess: I got so tired of her journals that I never wanted to read any other work.

Church: Well that's what so many people did. I haven't really read the whole thing by any means, but I do mean to go back and look at them again. I don't own them. I do have some of her novels. She wrote two or three novels. But in those days, well she was just in her 20s and she was already very, very advanced in every way. She was living with all these people and had these crazy men and everything like Henry Miller. They were all brilliant, I knew they were, but I would have been scared to death to get mixed up with any of those people. I was very...[sigh]

Riess: Well, you sound like a classic librarian.

Church: I guess I was. Maybe it was just as well. I'd just as soon not have had a lurid past in that respect. [Laughter]

But also I worked on a magazine that was called Transition, did you ever hear of that?*

*Begun as a monthly magazine to publish "adventurous contemporary literature of America" and translations of work from other countries, became "a quarterly for creative experiment" and in 1932 a "workshop for orphic creation." By 1935 it was "an intercontinental workshop for vertigralist transmutation." The war halted publication. A new Transition was issued in 1948. Transition was publishing all the expatriots, surrealist artists, photography, music, dreams, polemics. [S.R.]

Riess: Yes.

Church: It was published in Paris [April 1927, Issue #1 - April 1938]. I knew the people who published it. The woman who paid for it and who was sort of the chief woman was Maria [McDonald] Jolas, who's a perfectly marvelous woman. She came from the South and she was quite literary. She'd done quite a lot of translations. Then she married this much younger man, Eugene Jolas, who was completely haywire. But I guess he was quite brilliant. They knew all of these literary people. I used to do typing and things for them occasionally and that's how I first heard of Nin because they began to publish her.

They published all sorts of far out people. They published many of Joyce's things. I think they published Gertrude's book that she was working on when I was there. I couldn't get anything out of these things, they were just much too far ahead for me. Now I read Stein; every now and then I pick up something I have of hers and I'm just absolutely amazed, it's so fantastic.

Riess: You caught up with Stein.

Church: It just took such a long time to develop. In a way, you know, really, if given the choice, I would prefer that. I think people that develop with a great burst are done too soon--except that the burst caused them to do all these things. I haven't ever really done anything very meaningful. But me inside myself I'm happier to have done it very, very slowly. I think maybe it's deeper and also I'm still here. Poor Anais is gone and she really led a pretty awful life.

And then Kay Boyle, she was around there too. She was older than I was.

Well, speaking of the librarians, a lot of people in the library really were a little mouse-brown. I wasn't quite as bad as that, but I know what you mean.

Riess: Well, I'm quite sure that you weren't.

Church: I tell you I've always been kind of on the fringes of things. I've always been a little bit outer space. Really I've come to prefer it. Then you don't get too horribly involved. Some of these poor people--oh, dear.

Riess: Well, the passion I guess that went into all of this. I mean now you can read it with the pleasure.

Church: Very much so and I don't have to be involved in it. Much of it was pretty awful.

29) Tommy in Rome, Another Transition

Riess: I think it's interesting that you were in an American center in Paris, and that at practically the same time Tommy was in Rome at an American center, the American Academy. But it really was very different.

Church: Completely so. But he was certainly benefitting.

Riess: The American Academy in Rome's emphasis was on looking back.

Church: That's right. I think he didn't particularly want to. I think later he was very glad for the classical background. I always used to hear him say that it had trained his eye and that he used to think that was so important for his students. He worries about people today whose eye perhaps isn't trained.

I do think that is a part of your education, it seems to me. Because in that way you get proportion and perspective and so on, unless you're born with it, which I guess some people are, some of the great geniuses. But everybody isn't.

Yet I think he was looking. He was very eager for the new thing, for a turning. So many of the boys that had been in Harvard with him--and they were a group that were considered the brightest--went into various offices where they were doing huge things which of course ended with 1929. Tommy I think was always satisfied that he had missed that experience. He hadn't been in it.

Wurster was evidently another person that was destined to be in the "new world," as it became after the Depression. He had had a year working in a very old firm in New York and that all just went into its right place in him. It was there, but he was ready for this.

The Depression was perfectly marvelous really for both Bill and Tommy because it gave them an opportunity to try out things that had never been done really. In a garden in the old days I'm sure you had to have a stone or a brick wall. Tommy did all those things with wood. In Bill's case the same applies; the houses had been done in these very elaborate materials and Bill just got the Gregory farmhouse, built with those boards that split and had great gaps in between them.

Riess: But why would people be more willing to take risks like that during the Depression?

Church: Well, I think it wasn't everybody that was willing to do that. But there were enough exciting people here. There were some very exciting jobs as I look back on it. I can see it must have been really a terrific moment. Then you see they weren't having to change the format of their offices because their offices started out just little, tiny cubbyholes and so forth. You know Tommy's always been in the same office in San Francisco.

Riess: Did the Pasatiempo clients become the San Francisco clients or did that not necessarily make a connection?

Church: Well, yes I would think some of it did. Yes, some of them were people that we'd known, a couple of people. Then people used to come down from the Peninsula and rent houses in the summer. Many of those people became clients.

Riess: Having seen things?

Church: Yes, and then sort of gotten to know Tommy. Then also he was led across to the Monterey Peninsula, Pebble Beach, by various connections, meeting people at Marion Hollins' or something like that.

30) Client Connections: A Job in Scottsdale

Church: Yes, there's a tremendous amount of stuff down at Pebble Beach that he did, some pretty big places there. I guess that was in the days when there was more money. Bing Crosby, you know, was the first Hollywood person that was admitted at Pebble Beach. He built quite a large house there and Tommy did that garden.

Riess: Well, then, that must have been at a time when one only called Tommy Church.

Church: I guess so, yes, because I don't think he had any real introduction. I've forgotten who the architect was. I don't remember the house as being very distinguished, just big.

Riess: I wonder if that was gratifying, to be called sort of automatically for his name.

Church: I don't know that he ever thought about that. I think he was always perfectly confident within himself of his ability. I don't think he thought that he was the best.

Riess: It just seems less than personal, but then of course you can make the relationship personal, I guess.

Church: Well, that's what usually happened. That doesn't always happen, you know, in business relationships. It's quite amazing, when I think back over some of our friendships, they've almost all developed through Tommy's association with them, which was awfully nice for me to be a sort of camp follower.

Did I speak about visiting this place in Arizona? [Your Private World, p. 101]

Riess: No.

Church: Well, Tommy about 25 years ago did a job in Scottsdale. He has a lovely photograph in the office, that has always been on the wall, of a pool. I've always thought that it would be something I'd like to see. He's always thought highly of it. The house was done by Henry Eggers in Los Angeles.

When I was down there, about a month ago, I called up these people. Their name was Lewis Ruskin. They came out from Chicago. At the time that they built this house, and acquired the property, there was absolutely nothing as far as the eye could see. I imagine Scottsdale must have been just roads, nothing that was indicative of what it is now, which as far as the eye can see is nothing but habitations. However, they're sort of far away, halfway up on one of those extraordinary mountains.

This man very kindly came to get me and take me to see the house and garden. On the way there he described quite a lot about it. He said that of course having lived there [Arizona] he knew Frank Lloyd Wright very well and detested him, said he was mostly phony; he was one part genius and several other parts phony. I imagine a small place like that with somebody like Frank Lloyd Wright and that other man that's an offshoot of Frank Lloyd Wright, [Paolo] Soleri--there is an awful lot of inner workings.

Anyway, he'd heard about Tommy and seen some pictures or something, so he just called him up one day. He said, "I have a site project." And he said, "I thought afterwards if I had approached Tommy and said that I was building this house and I wanted to make a rose garden or something that he would have turned me down." (I imagine he would have, but this site thing took his ear.) Then he said, "It is in the desert."

And Tommy said, "Well, I never worked in the desert and I think that might be very interesting."

Church: The man said, "When can you come?"

Tommy looked at his program and he said, "Well, I really could come in about two weeks." So they made this date and he went down. At that time, they didn't have any building or anything there at all. But they knew more or less where they wanted the house to be, and how they wanted it to be set. Much of the land was steep and so a good deal had to be not only bull-dozed but really dynamited. It was very rocky--beautiful, rocks. Tommy spent about three days and he just walked around.

Ruskin said he still has Tommy's original plans and original sketches. He said Tommy had this briefcase with stickers from wherever he'd been--he always carried that. It had rolls of tissue paper, the kind of drawing paper that just one goes on top of another and you can trace, tracing paper I guess. He had the yellow tablets. He had all of that equipment.

He just wandered around and they left him completely alone. (I guess they were living somewhere nearby so they could get back and forth easily.) At the end of a certain time, he showed them these things. Then it was agreed that they would start getting the area prepared. So he came down again I guess and oversaw that.

Then he said, "There are only two architects that I can see doing the house that you want. They are Eggers in Los Angeles and Ed Stone in New York."

I said to Ruskin, "Well, I'm awfully glad you didn't have Ed Stone because you wouldn't have had what you've got now at all and you would have had something that cried 'Ed Stone.' Also he was in New York and you must have needed somebody that was nearby that could come at the drop of a handkerchief," because it was a terrifically difficult thing yet it looks as if it just all happened by mirrors, you know. The house is very, very understated and very small, seemingly. It's not really a small house, but it's perfectly beautiful. It's the only really beautiful place I saw there. And the garden is just exactly the way it was done originally. Everything is apparently exactly the same.

Riess: Is it a desert garden?

Church: Some things are desert, yes. It has a lot of beautiful rocks. When I got home I was describing it to Tommy about the rocks and he said, "Well, you know some of those rocks I painted!" When they first were blasted, they were very raw. He didn't want that, so he put some sort of a stain or something so as to cause them to look like the others.

Church: Then they're [the garden areas] rather small, since the whole effect is quite small, although, as I say, it isn't really. But there will be a little garden off the living room and another one off another area--well I can't really remember exactly how it was now. But the effect was just understated and subdued to the fantastic site.

It was extraordinary, with the huge mountains and then this long flat plain. They had to plant a lot so as to hide because what was evidently once just a sea of plain is now built up mostly. Of course, it's far enough away so that you couldn't really see them, but you could tell it must be pretty awful.

Riess: That's a name that's new to me, Eggers.

Church: Eggers? Henry Eggers. He's a Los Angeles architect. Tommy's known him for many years and he's worked with him a lot. He did some very stunning houses in Santa Barbara. I think the most recent one they worked together on. He's supposed to be retired now. I don't know what age he is; I guess he's about our age. He's a very interesting man.

Riess: You talked about Tommy walking around that site for three days. I wondered to myself whether he was ever completely stymied by something?

Church: Probably. Oh, I think often he was terribly stymied by things. Then he would grind at them until he got them.

Riess: Do you remember him ever coming home and saying, "I've got one here that I just can't..."

Church: Yes, occasionally he would say that he was terribly stuck. He wouldn't come home [laughs]. He'd remain at the office. And I remember thinking, when he first had to give up smoking, which happened some years ago, that I could understand the terrific impact of smoking on the drafting room. Because, of course, all architects are just furious smokers. Overflowing ashtrays are everywhere. And I asked him if this was true, and he said, "Yes, it was." There was always something else you could do; if you couldn't get it, you could light a cigarette, you see.

Riess: Yes, that is an option all right.

Church: Tommy was a very heavy smoker, unhappily, because that contributed to his bad lung condition now. Maddening.

Church: I went to another private home, at which no expense was spared, in Scottsdale, too. That was the typical sprawling--it just went every which way. You sort of went down two steps and there was a huge massive door. I thought it was absolutely hideous, and it was done by a famous New York architect. It was sort of ground out of the landscape. The feeling was that there had to be this terrific statement made. But where you have these marvelous natural settings I think the thing should be subdued to that, don't you? I hate these things that just are the terrific rivalries.

Interview #4 - May 11, 1977

31) Europe, 1937, Expectations and Meetings

Church: I found this book to show you, which is Tommy's photographs of the 1937 experience in Scandinavia. [Full page of photographs printed on heavy-weight matte paper, spiral-bound, approx. 11" x 14"] Actually I think they were some of the first published photographs of Scandinavian architecture. (They are not in order; we hop over to England and also to Germany.)

We went to Europe in 1937 for the first time together and we traveled for about four months. We had \$2,000. Goodness, we went everywhere you can think of, almost, and that's all we spent in four months! We were sort of like gypsies and we always traveled third class and everything was really marvelous.

Riess: What were you heading for on that trip?

Church: Honestly I don't know what he was heading for, I suppose just a renewal of his experiences of some ten years before. It was ten years since he'd been to Europe. We didn't go back to any of the same places except France. We didn't go to Italy or Spain, the places that he'd known.

Meanwhile he'd been practicing for seven years and he had come in contact with a lot of architects here and somewhat in the East, but not as much as he would like to have. So this trip was quite extraordinary.

Riess: When you say "architects," you mean landscape architects?

Church: No, architects.

This trip, I felt, almost more than anything else what it did for Tommy--I don't know what he felt, really, but I assume it was somewhat the same--was that he connected with people all over the world that were thinking in the same terms that he was. Not many, but the few instances that he had of that were really richly rewarding.

Riess: Had he made plans ahead of time about who he would go to?

Church: Not really, because we didn't have anything like the communications that we have now. There was one boy that we knew who had taken off after college. He was an architect. He graduated from one of the architectural schools and instead of going to the traditional places, Rome, or Paris, he went to Sweden, and subsequently to Finland, and he met Alvar Aalto.

Aalto was then quite a young man and virtually unknown here. I mean he was unknown to the average person, whereas today if you mention Aalto's name, everybody knows him, partly because of the furniture, of course. But I didn't have any picture of what he was like; I had no idea what we were going to find.

Riess: But you had heard about him from this young man?

Church: This young man I think had worked for awhile in Wurster's office. He had talked a great deal to Wurster about Aalto. So, of course, Bill talked to Tommy.

We made our plans, and we were to set off in July, and a short time before we left Bill said, 'Why don't I join you later, at the end of the summer, and we'll make a trip through Sweden and Finland?' That was more than acceptable to us and he joined us in Copenhagen.

Before that we'd been in Austria and various places like that, more or less vacationing. Tommy hadn't been making any attempt to get in touch. We didn't go to Berlin. We didn't do the things that we might have to get in touch with architects.

We'd been in England. Tommy'd seen some landscape people in England that he was interested in.

Riess: It interests me that you keep saying "architects" and that they lead the way for landscape architects?

Church: Well, they certainly did in the beginning I feel. Now Tommy may disagree with me, but I think so. I think landscape architecture in those days was beginning to evolve. There weren't very many [landscape architects] and when I first was married and came to live over here, a wife of a landscape architect called me up one day and asked me if I wanted to belong to the "Wives of the Landscape Architects" or something. I said, "Goodness me, that sounds awfully interesting. How many are there?" She said, "Fifty" or maybe it wasn't even that much.

Riess: Oh, that sounds like a lot, I think.

Church: Well, in 1930. Maybe it was less than 50. Anyway, I thought that sounded like a good many. I didn't know there were that many landscape architects. There really weren't, in those days. But you see now it's just burgeoned; of course, architecture has, too, but nothing like to compare. There were always quite a few architects.

Riess: If you were interested in architecture, on that 1937 trip, what did you look at in France?

Church: We did have, I remember, a couple of people that we looked up. In France we really looked at the old things; we didn't see very many modern things.

Riess: Not Le Corbusier and so on?

Church: We had a date with Le Corbusier. That was on our way back from Scandinavia, when Bill was with us. We stopped in Paris on the way back. Bill had made a date with Corbusier and we went to his office and found that Corbusier was only in his office from Tuesday to Thursday. They kept saying, "They do the English weekend," "Le Weekend." So we never were able to get in touch with him because we didn't have a great deal of time. I guess the middle of the week we could have seen him at least. I wouldn't have gone, but Tommy and Bill would like to have. Subsequently they both knew him.

Riess: Was the Paris Exposition a prime motive for your 1937 trip?

Church: Oh, I think that was part of it. Actually that was the first exposition we attended together. We had wanted to go to the Chicago one in 1934 and we didn't.

The setting [in Paris] was marvelous. I don't think Tommy was too crazy about the buildings. I don't remember very well; I don't remember which building he liked the best.

Riess: I brought a book of pictures of the gardens at that Exposition, and I want to leave it with you to look at with Tommy if you will.

Church: Oh, good.

I was trying to remember about that Exposition. I can't remember too terribly much about it except some buildings we didn't like. There weren't very many pavilions that were too fascinating really. The French leant heavily on their Oriental connections, French Morocco and all of that, and that was colorful, but I don't remember anything

Church: very outstanding. The building I think we both liked the best was Yugoslav, for some reason. I can't think why now. I'd like to see the pictures to recall it to me.

Riess: In England in 1937 who did you visit?

Church: I know he saw Sylvia Crowe and Nan Fairbrother. I don't remember his getting in touch with people that subsequently became great friends, like Susan and Anthony Jellicoe.

We had some friends in London and they loaned us their flat. Then we had quite a few friends that we motored places with, out into the country. Tommy as a rule preferred to be in the country. He wasn't so crazy about the cities.

Riess: What inklings did you have of how what you saw in Scandinavia would ever apply to California?

Church: Well, now that was interesting because honestly you wouldn't think that it had any connection with it at all. Except that points out Tommy's feeling that he had from the very beginning that he wanted to be very much connected with design. Because really the design was the only thing that connected in any way with our part of the world and Tommy's profession, the design that he saw in the European things in Scandinavia.

The thing that was interesting about Scandinavia was that in these other countries we didn't see any modern architecture, I don't believe. Naturally not in Austria and as I say we didn't go to Berlin so we didn't really see a lot of modern things. Scandinavia was the place that had moved more sympathetically I always felt into modern. Modern things were side by side with very old 18th century things.

Of course the architecture in Scandinavia was a little bit more restrained; it never was very flamboyant except in little incidental things there. It was sort of classic architecture rather like the restrained 18th century. It was very beautiful. But you passed along streets--of course, you did that in the other cities, too--and there would be one thing that would burst upon one--a little bit like, well, in a way what we've done here. I don't know, maybe that analogy isn't valid.

Riess: And the "one thing" would be a new thing?

Church: Yes, something modern. And their modern was very quiet. It didn't just leap at your throat. It was very gently eased into.

Church: In Finland there was really more of the thing that we would look for today in modern because there were only one or two architects in Finland. Aalto was one and I think there was one other that was known. Aalto really was getting all the contemporary work. By the time we got there, he was a little bit older than we were. We were in our early 30s. He might have been sort of 40ish.

And Aalto's wife worked with him. That was another thing that was interesting. The combinations a lot of times were husband and wife. Aino, Aalto's wife, designed furniture. She did all those beautiful things that they had in that marvelous shop! Oh! And the weaving! She had all the weavers. They had everything right there that they controlled. It was all beautiful.

Riess: That was new, the idea that the architect did not just do the shell, but all of the furnishings and everything?

Church: That's right. And there were two or three things that were absolutely sensational. Their own house was perfectly beautiful.

Riess: When did the first wave of "Danish modern" arrive here?

Church: I imagine that was--yes, we did see a few people in Denmark. We didn't see any very modern people.

Riess: But had it hit this country in any way in 1937?

Church: Practically not at all. Tommy was aware of it, of course, when we were married, much more so than I, although I had been in Paris through the 1926 Exposition which was very appealing and struck me terrifically. (Tommy doesn't speak of that.) The halles decoratif, that was the first thing in this early Exposition that I saw. And that was very extraordinary. I remember being terribly struck, however not so much by a whole structure, but by all the appurtenances. The furniture and everything that you used in daily life had all begun to be redesigned. A lot of it was perfectly beautiful. That was before I came home, before I was married.

Then when Tommy and I were married we agreed that we would like to have a lot of modern things. So we went out to find them and couldn't find anything! In 1930 Aalto's things weren't even in the East. In fact he gave us the distribution of his furniture in San Francisco and it was the first Aalto furniture that arrived in this country. Oh, people had bought some and they had brought it back with them but this was the first place where you could buy it. There were one or two architects who knew of it--there's an architect called Harry Weese, who traveled quite widely. (He's in Chicago now.) He

Church: had been abroad and traveled in Scandinavia. He was very cognizant. But an awful lot of people weren't, which is perfectly understandable.

Riess: Aalto was received in this country by a few clients and architects.

Church: That's right. Just as we got there he had had a first contact from Rockefeller. That was the first thing that he came to the country to do. I've forgotten what it was exactly, some sort of a small building, and that was in 1937.

Aalto and his wife had both been to school in Germany. They were students at the same time, in the same class, and they completed their work at some school in Germany. But by the time we got there--this is interesting because he was a very young man--he really was almost in control of the architecture there. He was getting all the huge jobs. It was really fantastic.

He had done this famous hospital [Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Paimio]. It is pictured in this book (gestures). Then he had done the library at Viipuri. That was demolished in the war.

He was working on a great big thing, really a town, for the pulp company [Sunila cellulose factory, Karhula] which is one of their big industries. I guess it was one of the early towns where everything is done in harmony. There were houses for the workers and the whole thing, just a regular city. We didn't see it. It was in the sub-planning stage, and he had just come back from work on it.

Riess: So Aalto would have had great appeal to somebody who was interested in planning also?

Church: Oh, very definitely.

The thing that Tommy was fascinated by was his settings, his site planning--the few things that we saw. (We didn't see a lot of his things unfortunately.) Tommy was so fascinated by his siting because he felt that that was so perfect in connection with the proposed building and also with the environment.

Tommy liked the clean lines of the buildings, light wood with stone or stucco. And the stark surrounding countryside, simple pathways and groups of birches in threes. He has used this effectively ever since.

In 1937 we expected that we would be going back and we were really cut off for ten years again. We did go back the next time we went to Europe after the war, which was in '48 or '49; we went to

Church: Scandinavia. That was the last time we saw Aalto. We couldn't go to Finland, but he came over from Finland and he spent the night with us. And it was in the summer, so the nights have the wonderful deep blue night, perfectly clear, and we just spent the whole night walking around Stockholm. It was very memorable, marvelous. [1937 trip discussed in next interview]

32) Agonizing with the Clients

Riess: I understand there were four designs for the 1937 Sullivan garden. I'm curious about why, whether that was Tommy evolving his design or whether that represented dissatisfaction on the part of the client.

Church: I think it's very possible knowing the client. She's a very intelligent and--oh, dear, I want to get the right word for her--she's a wonderful person. He's done I don't know how many gardens for her, tons. I think that she'd be very with it.

Riess: Aware?

Church: Aware of all the influences and the different kinds of things that were going on as well as appreciating any originality of Tommy's.

Now, of course, that Tommy did four plans for her is no surprise to me because many, many people he's done many plans for before the time he settled on one. His last really sort of working holiday we went down to the Islands. We were there a week and he did a job for a girl who was going over her whole living quarters. Really she had very limited space. But in that time he did three complete schemes for them to choose from. It was all drawn to scale and everything so they could see exactly what it was.

They said, "Why did you do this? Because now we can't decide, we want them all!" [Laughter] But I think he often did that. He gave people lots of choice if it was possible.

Riess: And it was a genuine choice? He didn't have any preference?

Church: Evidently he didn't. Now that's interesting, isn't it. If he did, he didn't reveal it. I never thought about that.

I used to be in on conferences a lot because when Tommy would be away I'd sometimes go with him for the weekend. I used to really just be tortured. I agonized sometimes over the clients because here

Church: they were in the grip of these dynamic men and poor things it was their money and they were going to spend the rest of their life with the results and they didn't want to make a mistake. They were just in agony. They didn't know what to do. I think two or three times I spoke out. So I wasn't invited again or something like that.

Anyway, I've realized that I had to be very careful of what I said because it was pretty high powered. That was the thing that Tommy has always been so marvelous about. He's not a sort of wishy-washy person in any way. He's as strong as iron, but he just had the sense when not to press and not to urge. Oh, I've been in on some frightening conferences. Poor things, my heart just bled for them.

Riess: Well, you could have been like the nurse, holding their hands.

Church: Well, isn't it funny. Another thing about me is that I don't get a quick reaction. Something has to sink in. Sometimes it takes many years. Obviously it's going to be too late because there isn't that much time left!

The other day when I went on this trip [Stanford Committee for the Arts Thomas Church Garden Tour, May 1], I was just amazed at how I didn't get the whole sense of those gardens when they were done at all. It took me years for it to sink in.

33) Before and After, Changes at 2626 Hyde

Church: Michael Laurie did a very clever thing. He showed two slides together like this (demonstrates). I guess that's often done, but I hadn't seen it exactly like that before. One was our front garden [2626 Hyde St.] when it was first done. The second one was this one. It was absolutely fascinating because I always thought the first garden was just beautiful. When Tommy suggested taking it out, I mourned. I said, "We can't give up that lovely boxwood, chairs and table."

Lo and behold, there's just no comparison! This garden is really a great garden. The other one was just I don't know what, sort of a pastiche.

Riess: What did you do in the other garden? Was it a place to be, or did you tend to walk through it?

Church: You know this garden has never been possible to use really as a sitting place. There are a few days in the year when we have very hot weather and no wind, but they're very rare. There's usually a

Church: great deal of wind. It didn't have the big trees that it has now, so it wasn't really very protected. I remember two or three times we had lunch down in the corner. There was always that corner--or was there? Yes, there was a flat corner part that we could have sat in. Now that we have this [kitchen] garden we never go sit in the other, we just use it to pass hastily through.

Riess: So that first garden was designed to be a garden to look down on?

Church: Yes, I think Tommy realized that it would never be a garden that would be used and so he made it perhaps more of a pattern to look down on. It was pretty from here, very pretty, but seeing the two together you realize--

Riess: Of course old pictures tend to be inferior photographs anyway. In new pictures the colors make things look better and cheerier.

Church: That's true. Although Tommy and I used to laugh a lot when we'd look at the "before" and "after" pictures in magazines. We almost always agreed we liked the "before" better. [Laughing] Don't you think so?

Riess: Yes.

Church: I think the "before" so often are more real, and more, I don't know, more appealing to me.

Of course, this house went through so many different changes. It was altered quite a few times. I think Tommy is always thinking. He's unable to alter anything dramatically now, but he's always after us to change things. He'll point at something and that has to go. Then something else and then he wants something else to come and be brought and put in its place. One reason he doesn't sit in this room very much now is because--well, it's more convenient in the kitchen and he loves looking out on that garden.

A couple of years ago when I had the living room and the downstairs painted I took all the books out and I've only just begun to put some of them back. But to arrange all the books is such a horrendous thing. You have to stick at it, you can't just pick it up and go back again and do something else, and my life has been too scattered in the last couple of years. Every now and then Tommy points to this wall here where I have three or four darling little tiny pictures that were hanging there. I haven't put them back because everything was put in boxes and it wasn't labeled, and I don't know which is which.

Church: When Tommy was in the hospital last year so much I thought, "Oh, well, while he's in the hospital I'll get all these things done." But I didn't get nearly as much done as I do now because I had to go out there all the time to prepare his food. He couldn't eat the hospital food, he would have starved to death if I hadn't done that.

Riess: This is your own combined library, or a library of landscape architecture?

Church: Some of the garden books have encroached here.

Both my sister and I worked in a library when we were in college. It's simply ridiculous that I can't organize that. I can do it. But the trouble with a private library is that the shelves are never the right sizes. You're constantly stopped. I can get all the books of a certain subject together but then they aren't going to fit in here. So then I have to start all over again.

34) American Academy, 1960 and Earlier

Church: But as I was saying, I think Tommy was constantly changing everything. I think his mind probably always moved on. Yet what I always have thought was so wonderful with him was that he drew the best from the old things. So many of the young people don't even know the words for certain forms of architecture. They simply aren't trained. What Tommy always said to these boys when we were in Rome that time and they were frothing at the mouth and wanting to do modern new things--(of course there's a lot of modern in Rome, too, just as there is everywhere in Europe)--Tommy said that their purpose for being there was to have their eye trained. That is true. If your eye isn't trained, you don't get proper proportions. That's usually the matter with architecture or gardens, that they haven't got the proper proportions. They don't have to necessarily design by the Beaux Arts, but you do have to have your eye trained, don't you think?

Riess: Yes. Could you do it in any country, or is Rome the place?

Church: Rome is a pretty good place. Also in France.

Riess: Do they still measure the Pantheon and that kind of thing?

Church: Oh, yes. The students do, they certainly do, the architectural students do. There are corps of them measuring everything. They're measuring the steps and they're measuring balustrades and all of those things.

Church: It isn't to copy--that's what I used to say when I was meeting a lot of these younger people--it isn't to copy something. You're not expected to do that. You're just expected to be given a decent basis. Like looking at the Parthenon: I don't see how you could be an architect if you didn't look at the Parthenon or pictures of it because those proportions really are so perfect.

Riess: Well, it is interesting. I read an interview with an Italian architect. He talked about growing up in Rome and how very influential it was because you were surrounded with great architectural spaces, wonderful fountains, piazzas, great shade and high buildings and so on. Then the article showed pictures of what he had done in this country--

Church: Perfectly awful.

Riess: Perfectly awful. It was interesting to me.

Church: It is strange. Heaven knows there are a thousand million examples of exactly that. Everyone doesn't have it. There has to be another ingredient obviously. The Lord doles it out rather sparingly I think, don't you [chuckles]?

Riess: I was reading a bit of the history of the American Academy. In the late twenties there was a struggle to reconcile the original founding concept, which was definitely to understand the classic ideas, with the new ideas.

Church: Well, of course, that still continued until not very long ago. It really did. And I can understand it in a way. In another way that year we were there [1960] I was somewhat sympathetic with the Fellows because they were bursting at the seams. They "did" old Rome and all of that in a very short time. They all got cars as soon as they got there and they dashed around the countryside. They were just bursting to express themselves in other ways.

Riess: What was Tommy's role at the Academy in 1960?

Church: He was sort of like a visiting professor, so that he was available to the students, to the fellows to answer any questions that they had. There were a lot of landscape architects. Not a lot, but there was something like two or three.

35) The Harvard Class, Where They Went

Riess: Norman Newton was the Fellow in 1926, Tommy's year. Then Richard Webel was next.

Church: Yes, Dick Webel. He's just died. He was a very good friend of Tommy's. He and Tommy and Stuart Constable were considered the stars. Poor Stuart, the last I heard of him he was working in the offices of Central Park in New York. He never emerged. Now I don't know what's happened to him. It may be that he's died.

Riess: Coming back to California was certainly a greater opportunity than falling into some practice on the east coast.

Church: The ones that stayed on the east coast were early trapped by the Depression because the Depression wiped out a whole way of life never to come again. All those big offices and everything.

Webel married a landscape architect; she was quite well known. They were married a long time ago. He started out working for Innocenti and then when Innocenti died he sort of took over.

Riess: Innocenti is the name of a firm?

Church: Innocenti was a very famous gardening firm. He was an Italian. It was based on all of the Italian villas. In those days you could import all of those beautiful things, miles of terracotta pots and goodness knows what all. All the atmosphere was there. He was a very attractive man. I never met him but everybody that did liked him very, very much. I never saw anything of his that was very original. It served people that had all the money in the world and they traveled in Italy and they came back and that was what they wanted. It was handsome, there was no question about it, but it certainly wasn't very applicable. The moment was at hand when it was all going to change.

I only met Dick Webel once and this was a few years ago in Florida. His wife had died and he had remarried; he'd married the sister of Jo Kimball, who was the wife of Dick Kimball, the architect. He [Dick Kimball] had been the head of the Academy when we were in Rome. Tommy had known him before but we got to know them very well.

Webel had just finished a huge garden in Florida and it was the saddest and the most disappointing thing, most unsuitable!

Church: Tommy and Dick Kimball had just finished for friends of ours a most enchanting house at Hobe Sound. There's no word to put on it. It was a delight from the start to the finish and everything about it was so suitable. Then we were matched across the road to this barn-like edifice right smack on the beach with decorations and embellishments that were unnecessary and unsuitable and then a huge formal garden that just drove you this way and that way.

Maybe here in the West we had more original clients, people that really were sort of sparked by the new and not relying so much on the old.

Riess: I've read The Little Garden by Fletcher Steele, and he sums up the Italian, French, and English gardens in a fascinating way. Did Tommy know him?

Church: I believe that Fletcher Steele was based in Boston, wasn't he?

Riess: Yes.

Church: I think Tommy did know him. Another friend of Tommy's that graduated with him from Harvard did work for him [Steele] for quite a long time and admired him very much. Tommy did, too. I think he offered Tommy a job, too, one time, but Tommy never wanted to work in the East. I guess he always wanted to return to California.

On the boat coming home from Europe in 1926 Tommy met the man who was the head of the landscape department at Ohio State. He offered him a job which Tommy accepted because he didn't have a job. Also Ohio was the family seat of his mother's family. Tommy had grown up very much amongst them and was devoted to all of his mother's family. So he sort of took it as a challenge. But very shortly he felt that he did not want to teach; he wanted to practice.

Riess: Do you think that at first he had been thinking of a more academic kind of career?

Church: I don't think so. I don't think he ever really did. He never was terribly interested in that.

36) More About Tommy's Family

Riess: You mention his family. The first time I talked to you we talked a little bit about his parents and more about his mother than his father. Did he keep up a contact with his family, Albert Church?

Church: Well, he never really saw his father, never met him consciously until he came back here to live much later. His father was the black sheep of the McNear family--his mother was a McNear. There are thousands of McNears and somehow he's related to them. The father was many times married and spent his life dissipating his talents, which were many. He was an inventor, and he could have done all sorts of marvelous things but he didn't.

He knew where he [father] lived in Piedmont when he, Tommy, returned to live and work. He was going by his house and saw this car--his father was an inventor and if he bought a car, he always did all kinds of things to it that made it sort of outstanding, his own and so on, very inventive. Tommy realized that that was where he lived.

He was about to go up and ring the doorbell when the man came out of the house. Tommy felt that it was his father and he went up to him and said, "I guess you don't remember me, do you?"

His father said, "Well, your face is familiar, but I can't think of your name." Famous last words.

Then Tommy said, "I'm Dolliver," because what was what the family called him, and he claims that his father turned pale. I should think he would, his general approach to the family being such that he should turn pale.

Riess: What an encounter!

Church: Isn't that extraordinary? Then Tommy did see him sometimes after that. He had a fantastic shop and beautiful tools. Tommy asked him if he would make certain things. He made fountain heads for some fountains Tommy did at Pasatiempo, and maybe one or two here. He was very gifted, just never did anything with it. Isn't that awful?

Riess: Am I correct in thinking that his mother must have been very ambitious for Tommy?

Church: Yes, I think she probably was. But I think what she did more than anything was to give him the most wonderful solid base on which to fare forth. He's told me so many times that she impressed on him that

Church: he must never depend on anyone but himself, from the moment he was just a little tiny child really. Then she taught him to do everything possible with his hands, which I'm sure he came by very naturally.

Riess: The grandfather was a gardener in some way?

Church: Yes, his avocation was gardening. They had a beautiful place in the Ojai and part of it is still extant. He made endless terraces around the house and they were filled with all the different kind of fruit trees. Oh, it was just fascinating! You could see what delight he must have taken in it all and he did all the work himself.

Riess: And Mrs. Church taught Tommy to do things with his hands. Was that because she envisioned some life work where he would be creative with his hands?

Church: I guess so. But nobody envisioned landscape architecture because it was hardly spoken of in those days.

Riess: Well, I thought when he started out studying law, albeit briefly, that he was following whatever was the wish of the family.

Church: That was a family thing. That was just considered the thing for him to do. He hadn't any contrary idea until he found this course. He hadn't realized that landscape architecture was a profession. He thought of it as an avocation, like his grandfather, and as many people in California did. Everybody in California gardened.

Riess: Yes, well that concept is still kind of with us at some level.

Church: Yes, I think we lagged in design. But that was wonderful for Tommy, because that [design] was his forte. People have always teased Tommy and said that he doesn't recognize plants and flowers and so on. But my heavens, how could you? Unless you could study a lifetime.

Riess: They don't tease Tommy about that? [skeptical]

Church: Oh yes they do. At least people used to. A lot of them, amateur gardeners, that's the one thing they can do. They can really learn about horticulture. They'd say to Tommy, "What about such and such?"

And he'd say, "Well, I obviously don't know. I'm not a horticulturalist." Oh, I heard lots of people make jokes about him.

Then another friend of ours--this is sort of a cute story about Tommy's use of rocks in a garden. One friend said, "You know, this is Tommy's approach. If there is a rock there he has it taken away at hideous expense. But if there isn't, he has one brought in at hideous expense."

Church: It's so interesting to see the incorporation of rocks. I feel that he was almost the first person that I knew of that did that in sort of a natural way. Though, what about the Japanese!

37) Frederick Law Olmsted, Phoebe Apperson Hearst

Riess: I read the biography of Olmsted by Laura Roper. He was quoted about his "disposition to reverie and daydreaming, that being the soul of designing." Do you think that described Tommy in any way?

Church: I think it must, but I can't say that I--I never think of him as passively being lost in reverie. It seems to me he was always actively engaged in something.

Riess: Maybe in the childhood years he would have had a chance to develop that side.

Church: Maybe. I'm perfectly certain that a large part of his thinking life has been reverie, but I don't think it was very--he wasn't just sitting. His approach to a new problem was always absolutely fascinating to me because it was a combination of thinking, but a great deal of action. I think of reverie as being passive. Of course, that isn't necessarily true. [See "Beyond the Rim," poems by T.D.C.]

Did you know that Piedmont Avenue, where I grew up, the part from the south boundaries of the University onward that has little islands in it and still has them, was designed by Olmsted? Someone told me that the other day.

Mrs. Hearst brought Olmsted out here, didn't she?

Riess: Yes, he was here and he was at Stanford both.

Church: Also didn't he design St. Francis Wood?*

She [Mrs. Hearst] envisioned Piedmont Avenue as driving straight from the University to Oakland. She wanted him to make all the designs. She wanted him to outline it. Well, where the block came I don't know. Piedmont sort of stops suddenly, doesn't it?

*Olmsted and John Galen Howard planned St. Francis Woods. Design approved 1912.

Church: Our old house was on the corner of Piedmont and Channing, a wonderful old Victorian. Well, hideous--I hated it, an old Victorian wooden castle. But it was a beautiful setting. It now has two fraternity houses on the property. We also had a very large wonderful garden, the kind of garden that children just love to think about. It was huge! It was right in the midst of the loveliest part, with the two little islands.

There was one island that ran all the way almost from the University down to Channing. Then after that there wasn't a middle island. And then there was a little round space, almost a little park.

When we were growing up my family always thought so poorly of Mr. Hearst that I was never allowed to look at the Hearst funny papers [laughing].

Riess: Just because Hearst himself was such a bad person?

Church: Yes, I don't remember my family talking about Mrs. Hearst. Well, they certainly didn't know her.

I didn't realize many things about the University when I was there, and what an impact she had really. I wasn't aware when I was growing up of Mrs. Hearst's tremendous influence, and how far-seeing she was, the fact that she went to Harvard and got a lot of these younger men that saw a chance to emerge from perhaps the closed New England setting. Because California's early days were drawn very heavily from Harvard. We had many, many people from Cambridge that lived around us in Berkeley. That even was true in my time.

Riess: They got themselves integrated into Berkeley pretty well?

Church: I think they were integrated in a marvelous way. They added so much to Berkeley life.

Riess: Was Tommy ever--I have a note somewhere about his having been asked to come back to Harvard and head the department?

Church: Maybe so. I wouldn't be a bit surprised. He never would tell me anything like that because I would have urged him to do so.

Riess: Would you have?

Church: Oh, I think so. I always urged him to do anything that was sort of away and out, without giving it very much thought.

Church: But he never had any intention of doing that. And he didn't really have the background for it. It must have been more from the point of view of his achievements and personality. He didn't have any University background as far as teaching went because he early indicated that that wasn't his main interest.

Riess: It would have had a certain parallel to Wurster, who went back with no background in teaching, though he went to school before he became dean at M.I.T.

Church: That's true. But that was the war. Wurster was obliged to make certain adjustments in relation to himself and his work and the office and so forth. Tommy during that time had this job out at Parkmerced and that sort of saw him through the war years. Also he was able to keep his office so that any time there was any work he could do it.

38) "I'm Investing in Myself"

Church: There was an amusing thing about that [1937] trip. Tommy had saved up a very small amount of money; certainly in today's book it would be laughed at. We decided to do this. He felt that he could. Also I think he felt a desire, as I say, to be in touch with the past because he loved Europe and would like to return and to reach some of these other things that were happening that weren't happening here, at least in California.

California in the thirties to some extent was not in very close touch. It still took three or four days to get to New York by train and things like that. The communications were not so tremendous. I think those were some of the things he was thinking about.

But one of our very conservative friends said, "Tommy, you know what you ought to do? You ought to take that money and you ought to invest it in PG&E stock." (Thank goodness we didn't, the way I feel about the PG&E today [laughs]. I'd be mad as anything!)

Tommy said, "Well, you know what I'm going to do with that? I'm going to take that money and I'm going to invest it in myself." And the look on this man's face I'll never forget. It was just killing. He just as much as to say, "Conceited! Imagine such a thought."

As a matter of fact, it was a very good investment because it did put him in touch with other people that he might not have come in contact with. Also it was the first step in a continuing relationship

Church: with people all around the world that were doing and thinking as he was doing and thinking. I do think for an artist that's wonderful because how lonely they sometimes must feel not being appreciated.

I think Tommy was always lucky because he was appreciated. But you see his work is more with people, closer to people. But I do think that it is marvelous to be in touch with other people [professionals] like yourself.

Then after the war we used to go back [to Europe] a great deal. Goodness, I think of some of the people that we might never have known otherwise. We'd meet them in Paris, we'd meet them in Rome, and goodness knows where all, wherever they were.

Tommy had a funny experience the last time we went to Scandinavia. This time we'd gone to meet Aalto and then we came down from Stockholm. There was something the matter with the plane so we sat in the airport waiting, for hours and hours. Tommy kept looking at his watch and he said, "Oh, this is terrible." (We were on our way back to London.) He said, "This is awful because I have this date to see this man that I want so much to talk to, Sir Peter Abercrombie." (I guess he's still alive, though quite elderly. I've forgotten what he was, whether he was an architect or a planner. Anyway, he was a very prestigious person evidently.)

So it got later and later and obviously he was not going to get to London in time. However the flight left, and we were in our seats, and all of a sudden he looked up, or Sir Peter Abercrombie looked up, and they realized they were on the same plane and that instead of having just a few minutes with him in his office, they had almost the whole day. They did have the most marvelous time. I sat in a little bit on it and heard their conversation. I realized they live in other worlds!

Riess: They shared ideas.

Church: Yes, and talked about the things that they'd seen. He'd just been there giving lectures or something and he talked about that. It was very rewarding. I don't believe Tommy ever saw him again.

Riess: Tommy could really talk on the idea level.

Church: Yes, he related quickly to ideas and expressed them. He spoke quite dynamically. I try not to think about that now because it's unrecorded. Nobody will ever hear it again. So sad. He had a wonderful dynamic way of speaking and of putting something across. He didn't run off the way I do.

Church: The other day one of my friends said, "Why couldn't this have happened to you?" [Laughing]

Riess: Well, he did great writing, too. I think he could well respond to most questions by saying, "I've written it down. Go and read the books."

Church: Yes, that's right. I think he did feel that. He always felt that in the first book was everything that he thought and did and tried to do and wanted to do.

I said to him one time, "Why did you do that? You should have kept a few little secrets." However, he did not.

Riess: You had your daughters by then, before you took that trip?

Church: Judy was born. We didn't have Belinda. We left Judy behind with family in Berkeley. She had a little Chinese girl that took care of her. That was something I could never envision doing again [laughter]. People don't do that now, they take the children, go off in a camper or something like that, travel for months, and have the children with them. We never would have done that. I never took my children downtown. Now the parents can't go downtown if they don't take the children.

Interview #5 - May 18, 1977

39) Exposition, 1925, Paris

Church: [Talking about book on French gardens from the 1937 Paris Exposition.] We both felt, looking at the book, that they seemed more influenced by--that they didn't seem to be totally original French.

This [1925] book you have brought is far more interesting.* I do remember the Swedish pavillion in 1925; it was very beautiful. And Laparde, he was probably the great one of this Exposition. The arcades here are charming, but there is so much going on!

[Leaping through pages] You can see that in 1925 they were trying to get away from the Beaux Arts and yet I don't remember that there was much criticism. Usually there's a lot of criticism at the time of a change, but I don't recall that in 1926.

You know, Tommy did a fountain in Santa Cruz, at Pasatiempo and his father constructed the pewter fountain head for it, and it's still there, really quite lovely--and it's not too unlike this [in book].** I must show it to Tommy.

Forestier I remember was a landscape architect at that time. Of course I didn't know anything about landscape architecture then.

[Looking at pictures] You know, we think the trellis was always built from the 2 x 2, and that came later of course because it was more practical, but the original trellis, the old treillage, was done when they did the massive pruning in the fall. There'd be certain trees that would be just exactly right, they'd have the straight branches,

*1925 Jardins, Marrast, Paris 1926.

**From later interview. Church: Very modern, and different planes--it didn't have sculpture on it. Riess: Just a trickle of water. Church: It goes into a basin. It's in a wall [at the house designed for Mr. and Mrs. George Howes by Bill Wurster. He was Marion Hollins' general manager. (Daniel Gregory)]

Church: and they'd save those, and then during the winter they'd prepare the treillage with it. I think of it mostly done in the country, especially in the Touraine where I spent a lot of time when I went over there. The old country houses, or barns, with just a plaster wall, would have this rather rough trellis--it wasn't too symmetrical, but it was really more beautiful, and of course in the spring sometimes it would burst into little green shoots.

You know that furniture that was built of very small branches of trees? We have some friends who have a house up at Tahoe and they inherited furniture that came from sort of a chalet in the Rocky Mountains and they had an old retainer who was trained I suppose in the old country to make this furniture, and it is the most beautiful. It's absolutely classic today. And whether he followed forms that he knew, or what, I don't know. When they first had it up there 40 years ago everybody made fun of it. Now it's worth purest gold.

Yes, I think this 1925 book is far more interesting. Tommy'd like to look at that.

40) That Day With Alvar Aalto

Riess: Now let me ask you to identify some of the pictures in your 1937 trip book. Whose garden is this?

Church: That was a very famous place, the home of a famous family in Sweden, the Magnussons, in Göteborg. It's on the water I believe. We were taken there, introduced to these people. They were a very wealthy banking family. I think they were Jewish, and I understand they had to flee at the time of the war. This [vase in pool] was the most absolutely beautiful Chinese bronze vase. Spectacular. I don't know who did the garden, they never told us. But isn't that absolutely charming; that's a little red Swedish farmhouse.

That [fountain sculpture] is by the famous sculptor Carl Milles. He later came to Cranbrook and taught there.

Riess: This is Aalto's house. And was this picture taken that day you arrived?

Church: Yes, all the pictures were taken that day. And the arrival was so amusing.



Church: When we got to Helsinki we hurried to the shop, which was also the office. We said that we had arrived and we'd like to call on Mr. Aalto. It may have been Saturday morning.

They said, "Oh dear, Mr. Aalto is away, he's up in the country, he may not be here." (As a matter of fact he'd returned but he'd told them not to say he'd returned so that he could rest. I guess he had driven all night.)

We were very much disappointed because we feared we wouldn't meet him. They said we could meet Mrs. Aalto in the shop in the beginning of the week, but I think we weren't planning to be there that long.

So that's when we took the car and thought, well, we'll drive and see everything we can see. So we got in behind this fantastic chauffeur who was just driving hellbent and knew exactly what we should see. He'd stop and he'd wave his arms at these various things that I don't even remember--they weren't so significant--but it was extraordinary.

The chauffeur, it turned out, was the chauffeur who always drove foreigners, and he had just been driving Frank Lloyd Wright all over, so he knew all of these houses. He was taking us on a regular tour [laughter] by Frank Lloyd Wright. He couldn't speak a word of anything but Finnish, and of course it's the most incredible language. So we had no communication at all, but I think we had Aalto's name all written out. He lived in a suburb.

This chauffeur didn't even look at the thing we had written on--the directions and everything. He started at breakneck speed and careened out into the country--shot like a bullet! We kept trying to get him to go more slowly; we wanted to look, and also it was so terribly dangerous. All of a sudden, with a tremendous burst of brakes and everything, he drew up in front of this very beautiful modern house.

Tommy and Bill both said, "Oh, how beautiful!"

Bill said, "Oh, now this is what we've come to Finland for."

So we said to the chauffeur, "Whose house is this?" The chauffeur didn't pay any attention, and he made no effort to tell us whose house it was or anything.

Tommy sprang out of the car, immediately loaded his camera, and started taking all these pictures. Bill went up to the door very politely to ring the bell or whatever.

Church: As he did, I noticed up above there were two awfully cute, blond, sunburned children, eight and ten, something like that. They were looking out of an upper window and they looked at us and their mouths drew down at the corners. They had been evidently promised by their parents that they were going to be taken swimming, and so when they saw these people coming to spoil the day from every window we saw them just grumbling. They weren't pleased to meet us at all. They didn't do the traditional curtseying.

Then the door opened and a very large lady who spoke English said, "Ah, but you have telephoned."

Bill was still exclaiming and asking who owned this beautiful house. He didn't catch on that it was Aalto's house! Neither of them did, but I did because I realized immediately that this woman was Mrs. Aalto. She said, "You've telephoned"--and we had been trying to reach him by telephone. They were both so excited that they didn't realize it at all.

Bill, who was so overwhelmed, and Tommy, who was running around photographing, kept saying, "But who's done this marvelous house?" And Mrs. Aalto kept saying to me (in deep accent), "But it is my hoosband." When Bill and Tommy learned, they almost went into a tailspin.

Riess: The house was extraordinary?

Church: Oh, yes, indeed. It was so new. It just shot us through, like a quiver full of arrows. Of course the inside was a little more exciting to me, because I don't grasp the full impact of [the exteriors]

And then Tommy just adored this casual sort of garden. He would never do this, but he just loved it. [See photograph showing young trees and rock wall and stones.]

And you can see [looking forward in book] that Tommy was just enchanted with this new camera, and all the different angles. Of course he turned the film like this so that it would make that angle when he printed it [looking at roof detail].

Well then, she let us in, and Alvar Aalto suddenly emerged. He had on his dressing gown and he had just returned from an all-night drive from some far-away place in the interior and he had not intended to receive anybody that day.

But when he found us, he just opened up. He was learning a little bit of English from Victrola records because he was shortly to make a trip to England. You know, it's tragic that his speech was not recorded

Church: because when he was learning English he had the most fantastic, vivid, use of words. Whatever he was describing--well, I think I did make notes one time and maybe I'll find them some day. He made several trips here and we saw quite a bit of him and by then he spoke much better. But this was the sort of thing you would never want to correct, because it was so vivid.

He was so excited, and we ended by spending the whole day and practically the whole night together. Oh, we just adored him, a marvelous person.

Riess: Had he heard of Tommy, and Bill?

Church: He had never heard of Tommy--yes, I guess he had. He greeted us with saying, "Bill, now tell me about the--" and it's a famous house that Bill and Tommy did. It was a fascinating house, built of concrete blocks, the Frank McIntosh house, in Los Altos Hills. It's still there. I asked Tommy about it the other day and he said, "Oh yes, it's still there." The man who built it was quite a fantastic man. It was a very sloping property and you entered down a great long flight of concrete steps, like this, and then the house unfolded and expanded. He [Aalto] had the plans and he had studied the plans and he was just fascinated.

41) Other Photographs from 1937

Riess: Where is this? [photo of waterfront at dusk]

Church: It was in Stockholm. And in 1937 was the first time we saw this type of construction [using a crane]. It was invented by either a Belgium or a Frenchman. Now you wouldn't think of doing anything without one of those things [cranes]. The picture was taken in the evening as we headed out from Stockholm to Helsinki on a fantastic passenger boat. We sailed all night.

Riess: Now what is this place?

Church: Isn't that beautiful! That is [the esplanade in front of] the town hall of Stockholm. And that I'd heard about from the moment I began meeting architects, because all the young men that could possibly get to Stockholm in the twenties and thirties, mostly the thirties, went there, and their great high moment was the Town Hall. I always imagined it was very modern, but it isn't at all. It takes and diffuses all the old, romantic, almost like 18th century. And it used all the artists in Sweden; they were all identified with various portions of it.

Church: There [in front] is this great sweeping terrace and two of these [shell shaped fountains]. Isn't that just the most beautiful thing? When I see the ghastly modern fountains, for instance that disgrace down on the embarcadero. Can you think of anything worse? Wouldn't that have been beautiful [to have fountain like the ones in Stockholm]?

And another thing. I spoke to you about Harry Weese. He made this talk long ago, way before the war when he used to come out here, and he was so upset about what was happening to our embarcadero, to our waterfront--and of course it is upsetting to anybody who loves all the waterfronts of Europe--and he had hundreds of pictures of how the waterfronts in every part of the world had been developed, even down to the tiniest and most insignificant and unknown places, how they were used. I just spent a whole day there when I got to that place and just felt I was breathing, eating, something delicious.

Riess: But where do people sit? I would expect lots of benches in European parks.

Church: Yes, I think there was a lot of sitting space in the back. True, there isn't much shown. I think people walked back and forth in it a great deal. But can you think of anything more beautiful?

Riess: Now, here are you and Aalto. He's in his bathrobe.

Church: Yes, he never had a chance to get dressed until evening.

[Looking at 1937 book again] And this is the great concert hall, in Göteborg, the first thing of its kind that we had ever seen. The money to build it was given by that family, the Magnussons, whose house we looked at earlier. You can see how exhausted I was. [Betsy seated on steps] Bill and Tommy would just never stop.

The concert hall was closed, but the family, when they heard that we wanted to see it, sent their chauffeur to take us to it. The chauffeur had the keys and he opened the concert house and took us in. It was the first of this kind of thing that we had ever seen. We were staggered. The wood was a screen made of half-rounds. The sides flowed around. The chauffeur's daughter came to play the organ for us so we could hear the accoustics.

Now here [another view of the Stockholm waterfront] are the sitting places. And this interests me. I haven't look at these pictures for a long time, but you know there's a picture that Tommy has in his office that he took of a garden in Santa Barbara, Montecito, and it has very much this same sort of a feeling, a big space like

Church: this and then the swimming pool and the figures and the background of the trees--I don't suppose he even thought about that--but it does seem the same. In the garden in Montecito it's sort of reversed. Here is sort of a wading pool and a place where people sit. [photo of small glass building]

That's Denmark. There was a lot of the casual modern building, commercial buildings. He was taken with that both in Sweden and in Denmark. He really was crazy about both of those countries.

This was a little family that we knew in the Munich area. [Five people in an outdoor cafe.]

And this is a fascinating picture. This is a man we see all the time, Otto Lang. And this is Maudie Schroll, my very, very old friend, and this is her brother Jerome Hill, the painter, who has died. And this is Marina Chaliapin, the daughter of the singer. She was a great beauty, and unhappily her life didn't develop. I remember I was telling Jerome something that was very interesting to both of us. It was in Salzburg, such a lovely place. See Jerome has his camera too--he and Tommy were both mad about photographing.

Riess: Were you all traveling together?

Church: No, Tommy and I were on our way north to meet Bill in Copenhagen and we ran into them. We had allotted a day for Salzburg, and we ran into Maudie. She made us stay and we stayed for several days, and then went straight up to Copenhagen.

Riess: Is Otto Lang an architect?

Church: No, I'll tell you, he was one of the ski people who was gotten over here from Austria, from Salzburg, during the war so that he wouldn't have to fight. He got several jobs here at various ski resorts. And then when the war cut down on that--he was a very good photographer, and he's doing some photographing for Tommy right now. He's just moved here.

Those are our English friends [having a picnic].

That's a German town we went to visit.

That's Boris Lovet-Lorski, the Russian sculptor who had a very high moment in France in the twenties and alas never progressed from there. Awfully sad.

Now that's the hospital [TB sanatorium in Paimio].

Church: That's a little tea pavillion in Helsinki. I understand during the war the glass was all shattered. [Looking at slender metal columns between curved glass sides.] It's just like some of the cast-iron architecture in New York. We have a little bit here, too. Isn't it charming? Just too lovely. And then this sort of leafy atmosphere. That was one of Aalto's favorite buildings.

That's Sweden, apartments. That's the first time we had seen this sort of arrangement with the running balcony and then the dividers so that people from the different apartments have [private balconies]. Now these are just a dime a dozen, you know. In those days it was very unusual. And the awnings were painted bright colors.

Now this was what Tommy loved. He loved these paths that just wound through the trees [also looking at sanitorium in Paimio]. Of course the birches were so lovely, the background of the green trees.

Riess: Were those paths designed by Aalto?

Church: Yes, I think Aalto did that. He just made those lines on the paper.

42) Betsy and the Furniture

Riess: After you got Aalto up and out of his bathrobe--

Church: He put on his clothes and he said, "Come, we go." And he just took us everywhere. He took us to a marvelous place for lunch.

Then he said, "Now we're going to go swimming and then we'll change and we'll meet for dinner at a restaurant I've just finished, and then we'll go on from there." I'm not a night person and I just don't go all day. I don't know how I did it but it was so stimulating! We did all of that.

Then when we went swimming--you know, they don't wear suits. Fortunately the ladies were somewhat divided from the men. In those days I would have been terribly shocked, I guess. I don't know.

Riess: That was the only day with him? But then when did you make your plans for the furniture business?

Church: It was all done that very day. I don't know how it happened like that. Now wait a minute, maybe we did stay longer, because later he took us to office buildings and things that he'd done, the building that

Church: the furniture he designed was created for. We may have stayed another day or so, but it was not very long.

But he [Aalto] said, "I have no outlet in America and I'm looking for an architect's lady," as he put it, "who would be interested in having the furniture."

Tommy gave me a big nudge and I said, "Well, I'd be interested in it."

He said, "Well, perfectly fine." And that was all that was done or said. Then I guess he must have written to us, or Tommy must have written to him. I don't know how it all came about.

I had worked for some time for a marvelous member of the Brandenstein family, Agnes Brandenstein, who had a beautiful shop before the war, called Cargoes. It was one of the great shops, that and one on Post Street that belonged to the two men who now live in Switzerland, they made so much money, Amberg-Hirth. Their shop was very deluxe. Hers also had very many beautiful things but it had some other sides to it, and it was very personal.

I don't know how I happened to go to work there. But anyway I did and we became the greatest of friends. I always felt that had she not died so terribly young I'd still be doing something with her, because we just saw eye to eye, we just got on like a house on fire.

When we got home--actually I'm so stupid about business and everything like that that Tommy did all the business part of it in the office with his secretaries and bookkeeping people and so forth because I'm evidently incapable of doing things like that properly. At least I've never done it. I guess he felt it was less trouble to do it than to try to train me.

Riess: Had you thought of making Cargoes the showroom?

Church: We thought of that on the way back because we did not have the outlay--

My goodness, the first amount of furniture I think was something like \$1000 and when I think of it, it was just tons of furniture. It all arrived here, on this sidewalk, in the most beautiful crates with mitred edges that were absolutely like custom-built furniture. You'd keep them today. You'd live in them.

I just stood there gasping at them. I saw the workmen tearing into them and I said to Tommy, "I can't stand it." Tommy said, "Don't be silly." Anyway we unpacked it all right here.

Riess: And moved it into the house?

Church: Some of it came in, but by that time we had made the arrangements with her [Agnes Brandenstein]. She was wanting to somewhat change where she was, and the old Vickery, Atkins and Torrey building was vacant, so she got that, and she gave me a great big room in the back that would have just been used for a storeroom for her because her shop had an intimate feeling.

Riess: That's what now is Elizabeth Arden?

Church: Except that it's changed. Gardner Dailey did it over for Elizabeth Arden and you didn't go through a garden. I must look at that again.

Anyway, I loved being there.

Riess: How much did you work?

Church: I began by just going in the afternoon. Of course, in those days I had lots of help. I didn't have to think about housework. (Now I think about it but I still don't do it.)

Riess: How did you advertise the furniture?

Church: I don't know, she must have done something. I think maybe we had sort of a "do." Then I had exhibits or paintings there, too, I did quite a bit of that, and we'd have a vernissage.

The other day, on the garden tour, I met a couple that was so interesting. They go all over the world and the husband sets up university libraries, tells them what they should have, an expert needless to say. His wife was a marvelous woman, I was so drawn to her, and she said, "Oh, all these years that we haven't seen you, it's just terrible."

She took me into the house and I saw all this Aalto furniture that you don't see much anymore now, the sort of classic pieces.

I said, "Where'd you get your Aalto furniture?" and she said, "I don't remember, we got that someplace in San Francisco."

I said, "Oh, you bought it from me." [Laughter]

Riess: Would just certain people buy it and it would be too "far out" for most?

Church: Yes, it was much too far out for most people. They didn't care for it at all. They thought we were sort of crazy. I used to have various pieces scattered around this house in amongst the old things, but they never looked so terribly well. Tommy has a lot down in the office.

Then I had two classic chairs and they were perfectly beautiful and I gave them to the University, to Duke Wellington, because he has a collection of different types. One was really a beautiful classic but it was a hard chair to keep, it was always peeling off and people would sit in it and damage it.

You know, it was built as very inexpensive furniture. The stools were something like \$7.50. Now they're at least \$50 if not more. Originally it was mass-produced things. He [Aalto] was doing all these buildings and big factories and restaurants. He had so much work his head was spinning. It was done in an effort to meet the demand; he couldn't get the things, so he had to make them.

Aalto's first outlet in Europe, in the world, was Artek, in Zurich, which evidently before the war was out of this world. It had the best of everything and the first of everything. I'd heard of him [the owner of Artek] long before I knew Aalto. He was Jewish, so he had to disappear during the war. But he had such materials! I believe somewhere I had a shred that came from him. You would gasp. They say the shop was unbelievable. It disappeared during the war.

But he [Aalto] didn't have things in England. People had furniture, but it wasn't for sale. There were only a few modern houses, you know, in England. They had a period just before the war of doing wooden houses, and they would send for the furniture.

Oh, a marvelous thing about Aalto's house! Here was this country that had nothing but wood. And we said to Aalto--I of course didn't know what wood it was made of--but Bill said, "How'd you get this Douglas fir?"

Aalto said, "Oh, it was very expensive, we had it brought all the way by boat"--from wherever the Douglas Fir comes from!

Yesterday--this is digressing--Tommy and I were talking about some friends who were soon to come back from London. When I realized they had been gone only about three weeks I said, "What on earth did they do that for?" Then I suddenly thought, this is around the middle of May, they'd gone to London, they'd copied us, because we always used to go to Paris for our wedding anniversary.

Church: I didn't think more about it, but a bit later Tommy got my attention and reached over to the paper and made a big circle around May 17th and put "47" with a big exclamation point. Yesterday was our wedding anniversary and neither of us had remembered it! I hadn't, and Tommy usually always had to be prodded to remember to give me something. So we had sort of a jolly little celebration.

A couple of days ago I saw in Design Research--they had them back again--the Aalto vase. Have you ever seen that? You haven't been able to get them for years. We had them in the shop. In Finland they cost about \$7.50. In the shop they were maybe \$10 or \$15, and now they are \$55. But I'm going to get one for Tommy. He should have one, right here on this table.

The first time we saw them [the vases] was in the house, and she [Aino Aalto] just brought the flowers from the field, didn't arrange them, and just let them fall in the vase and take their own shape. That was Aino's design, probably her most famous design.

The bent wood furniture, that bent wood tradition in all of those countries, comes from the skis, the snow shoes, the little casual chair. You'll find examples that go way, way back of the bent wood. And they were making some in Sweden. But Aalto--his was designed for mass production. It was awfully clever.

Riess: Why did he want an outlet? There couldn't have been that much profit.

Church: Maybe he just wanted to spread it. That moment that we arrived he was just beginning--as I say, he was going on his first trip to England shortly and also he was coming in the fall to this country. He had been contacted by the Rockefellers and what it was he did for them I can't remember. But he had the first people reaching out to him from this country, and I think it was enormously exciting to him.

Riess: He had a show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1938. He also had the Finnish Pavillion in Paris in 1937.

Church: Yes, I remember that, because he spoke about it. I do keep mixing up the two fairs in my head. Funny Tommy didn't take any pictures of that. We were in Paris on our way back and we all, with Bill, went. We had a week in Paris.

Riess: What happened to Cargoes? Did that come to an end after the war?

Church: It was considerably after the war. It ended because Agnes Brandenstein became ill with cancer and died fairly soon which was terribly sad because she was quite young.

Riess: I have a reference to Tommy having had a showroom in 1954.

Church: Was it 1954 really? I guess so. I didn't realize it was as late as that. During the war the shop was still open. It always takes a little while for things to catch up, both bad news and good news. The furniture continued to come for some time.

Then it took Aalto a little while to shift his operation to Sweden. In 1952 when we were in Sweden to meet Aalto, one of the things we did was go to the factory in Sweden. We chose quite a few things, so the place was going then.

Riess: Did Tommy participate actively in the business end of it?

Church: He did take care of all the financial and so forth. He did the ordering. He and Agnes discussed it together and I put in a word here and there, but mostly it was their decision. She agreed with everything that we wanted.

After she became ill a cousin of hers began to run the operation. Various young people that I knew worked there. It was an unusual place. It was one of those unique shops of which now there are many all over the world, but there weren't as many of them then.

The cousin carried on, but then she developed the same thing and died, which was very sad. So I guess they just liquidated everything then. I don't seem to recall that.

Riess: The Aalto furniture didn't have a continuation?

Church: No, there was never another sales place for it in San Francisco as far as I know. I mean Knoll Furniture is the only business that I know of today in any of these cities that carries on more or less in that vein with importations and designs produced here, there and everywhere. Almost everything is sort of boiled down to places like McGuire where they control the designs and control where they're made. People don't import except under their own conditions seemingly.

Riess: You had a gallery there?

Church: Yes, I showed one of my very great friends, Caroline Martin, who was quite a well-known artist in the thirties and forties and fifties and she still has shows every now and then. She lives here. She's had shows in New York and she's a girl that studied abroad and is a natural born painter.

Now she's not young any more and she finds it difficult to do long hours alone in the studio and also the work is sort of heavy, lifting canvases and framings and so forth. I just went to see her

Church: this morning to say goodbye. She's going to Europe, she goes every year. I said, "Now take a sketch book and make drawings in your sketch book. You don't have to make those into paintings, but they'll be something that you have within you that you still can get down on paper." I think it's a terrible mistake to let something like that go, don't you?

Riess: Oh, I do. Besides which, I often think that the little sketchy thing is better than the finished work.

Church: Oh, I'd rather have an artist's sketchbook than almost anything I can think of. I think it's the most rewarding thing. I think that their little notes--and you know sometimes they put a little arrow and everything, I think it's the most personal! It speaks worlds to me. I have lots of her paintings around now. I don't know where any of them are. They're not up just at the moment.

We had a show of hers and we did have a couple of others. I've been trying to think as I was talking, and it's terrible that I can't think who else we showed. We didn't do it regularly, but the room was a big square room with nice light and practically empty except for the furniture.

Riess: Was Caroline Martin's work very modern?

Church: Her things were charming, French-oriented somewhat like the Impressionists. They were not terribly far out. I think that's perhaps one of the reasons why she hasn't been so terribly active in recent years because she doesn't work in that medium.

43) Flying

Riess: To go back, in 1939 Aalto had something in the New York World's Fair.

Church: We went to that, too, Tommy and I. Yes, I remember going to the Finnish Pavillion.

Riess: The Finnish Pavillion in Paris in 1937, the 1938 show at the Museum of Modern Art, 1939 the New York World's Fair, and then he came out here in May of 1939.

Church: Yes, now I don't remember seeing--maybe Tommy saw the Museum of Modern Art one in 1938. Tommy had begun going East then. He'd begun flying. Tommy never flew. He didn't want to fly. I said, "Well, you can't be a landscape architect and not fly. It's just too ridiculous because you have to see."

Church: I always remember this friend of mine, Jerome Hill, who was given to wonderful statements. He said that after the gardens of Versailles, balloons simply had to be invented because otherwise they could never manage to see it. That's absolutely true. I thought that the other day.

Did I tell you about going up in a balloon? I think I must have. A friend took me up in a balloon for a birthday present. There's a man over in the East Bay who has figured out a wonderful way of life. He takes people up in his balloon. The whole balloon becomes a package and goes into a little straw gondola that's just like a little wicker trunk practically and goes in the back of his truck. He can go anywhere that it's possible to fly.

We went over very early in the morning. (He only flies very early, doesn't start a minute later than about 8 o'clock, so we had to go very early.) It was the most marvelous experience, it was an hour that was just unbelievable. You're up above ground, really not very far from the highway, yet you can't believe that you're anywhere that's near anything. We floated over a beautiful pond and birds flew out that we'd never been so closely. We saw a fox chasing some rabbits and all kinds of things that you would never see if you were driving along. Then the pattern of the land was so beautiful.

Anyway, I persuaded Tommy finally to fly East. He was hooked in one easy lesson. He practically never came down to ground again.

Riess: Do you think he really enjoyed flying over the landscape?

Church: In the early days he just loved it. The flights were so beautiful. Then later on flying really has become not nearly as nice as it used to be. But it's essential. Tommy always liked to get to these places quickly. He never liked to go on boats or anything like that, dawdle. He liked to get to them quickly so that he could have time there.

Riess: And he liked being called from great distances?

Church: Yes, he did. That was a great challenge, to work in different places.

As I look back on it, he used to meet it in the most extraordinary way. He was never bothered by any of the things that most people would worry about--I would, for instance. He just assumed that everything would go as smoothly as it always did.

Riess: That he would get there and everybody would be on time and that sort of thing?

Church: Yes, and then the problems of working in another country never bothered him in the slightest. He didn't particularly seek jobs in other countries, but he did like an occasional one very much.

44) Aalto Visits San Francisco, 1939

Riess: Why did Aalto come out here in 1939?

Church: He came out here to see all of us.

Riess: I read that you and Mrs. Gardner Dailey represented a sort of committee to welcome him and take him around town.

Church: Oh, goodness. What troubles we got into.

Riess: Tell me about that.

Church: It was very complicated. There were wild jealousies of hostesses and oh, my heavens! I never had had such experiences of that.

Riess: It seems like you would be the natural person.

Church: Well, Marjorie was very executive. I don't think Marjorie and Gardner had met Aalto. They were traveling in Europe the same year that we were, but they were smart. They went through Finland and they entered Russia. They came down through Leningrad and they went through Warsaw. We didn't do that.

I am sure that Aalto came especially to see Bill. However, he became very friendly with Gardner. He was very devoted to Gardner, Aalto was.

Riess: Why even were you two women designated as a pair to greet them? It sounds more formal than the situation calls for.

Church: Well, it was sort of silly. And I had no idea that he was going to be so sought after, but of course everybody wanted to entertain him, oh, the sort of cultural people in San Francisco. I wouldn't say everybody. I don't think the general run was all that fascinated by the idea of him, but people that were quite knowledgeable about architecture and so forth were all anxious to meet him.

Riess: How long was he here?

Church: He must have been here a little while. I remember the Daileys had the most beautiful party on one of San Francisco's fantastic tropical evenings. Everybody was in tropical costumes and mostly outdoors, in their apartment on Telegraph Hill.

Riess: Would everybody come, would Wurster come to a Dailey evening?

Church: Yes, yes, Wurster was there and a lot of the architects and I guess their wives, I really don't remember. I do remember that a lot of people were very angry. One lady banged up the telephone and said she'd been insulted because she counted on having--I don't know who insulted her, but anyway. I don't know who she was. [Laughter]

Oh, and it was the time of the Fair, this evening that I described, and their balcony looked right out over Treasure Island, so we sat there looking at the lights of the Fair.

Gardner did a building for some South American or Central American country. Then he worked with Frances Elkins on the Women's Club. Bill I guess did some things. Tommy didn't do terribly much at Treasure Island. He did some small things.

Riess: When Aalto came out here then, did he have an agenda of people he wanted to meet?

Church: He was very casual about the whole thing. He left everything to us. I think really that his sort of favorite person that he met was Gardner. I think they were very friendly. And Bill. But Aalto and Gardner used to prowl night spots and things like that. Of course Aalto consumed more food and drink than any human being I've ever seen or heard of and without any of it showing in any possible way. He always was as lean as a greyhound. Maybe he got stout later.

Riess: Did he bring his wife on that expedition?

Church: She wasn't here the first time but she was the second time they came. They came another time and Mrs. Gregory entertained them at Santa Cruz, which they loved. Tommy took some wonderful pictures of them at Santa Cruz, too.

Riess: And you said that they had trouble getting it manufactured, but did the furniture business continue through the war?

Church: Well, it did. But it was very hard for us to get it.

As I look back on it today the things you'd do now when you had something like that, hundreds of things that we never thought of. The furniture just really sold itself. I didn't make any

- Church: particular effort to sell it. We didn't have a lot of publicity or anything like that. People just heard about it and they bought it.
- Riess: It certainly went beautifully with Aalto's buildings. Did it go beautifully with a new Wurster house or a new Dailey house?
- Church: I don't think Gardner ever used it. His wife had very beautiful old furniture always. He probably used it in houses that he built.
- Riess: I was thinking that the architect certainly could recommend it and be very convincing about it.
- Church: Yes, that was the way it was really largely sold. But people couldn't just come in the shop and carry an armchair away because the showroom was simply examples. They really weren't for sale because they were the only ones we had and we had to order.
- Riess: Was it through a wholesale "to the trade" arrangement?
- Church: I really don't remember that. I don't think that had come into such ardent being as it has today. Don't you hate it? "To the trade," isn't that a bore? You know perfectly well that anybody that can is going to get in there.

But as I think about what you'd be obliged to do now, it was so much nicer in those days. After all, it should sell itself. He was so casual about it. I guess he was pretty casual about everything.

45) "If He'd Had Three Lives"

- Riess: Did Tommy find the idea of Aalto's sort of architecture and his controlling of the environment and everything very appealing? Did he ever entertain ideas of doing more than gardens?
- Church: Well, he would love to have. If he'd had three lives, I think he really would have liked that. I think almost anybody would. But then when we've talked about it I've always said, "Tommy, you're so lucky that in your time you saw the effects of as much as you could possibly do to extend that. Your influence did."

You know hundreds of people, if they had the bathing house to do by the pool and things like that, they just begged Tommy to do all those things. But he really never could.

- Church: Funnily enough, for years architects had designed the terraces and collected their percentage on that and designed the walks and the roadways and all of that, and Tommy in the early days was somewhat "relegated" to garden spaces. When he began to move more and more into the picture of the setting, some of them didn't like that at all, yet they would have been just furious to have any sort of structural infringement. Not that that made any particular difference, but it was too much trouble to establish something like that. Of course in the early days someone like Bruce Porter just glided back and forth from the house to the garden.
- Riess: Oh, yes. I think of Filoli. I think he had a lot to do with the garden there.
- Church: He did the garden, not the house. The terraces, however, I think had all been done by Willis Polk. They'd been outlined by him when he did the plans for the house. But then Mr. Bourn quarrelled with Willis Polk. And it was finished by Hobart which was too bad because the house is very insignificant compared to what it could have been.
- Riess: I guess in the early days the landscape architect was only consulted about the plants. I remember John Gregg saying sort of mournfully when I asked him about how he worked with John Galen Howard, "Well, occasionally Howard would ask me what sort of tree to put in here." That meant that Howard took over completely.
- Church: Oh, he did, he did. There weren't enough people to go around. It was hardly a profession. It wasn't defined as a profession and it wasn't organized in any way. Now these professions are all so heavily organized, with rules and things you have to pass and goodness knows what.
- Riess: I guess when we were talking about Cargoes, Incorporated and so on, I was interested in your point of view of what the other important showplaces were in San Francisco. V.C. Morris?
- Church: Yes, V.C. He had some very lovely modern things, too. His shop was very personal, reflected their wonderful taste.
- Riess: And Gumps?
- Church: Gumps always had some Oriental atmosphere. I don't recall. I think perhaps if they had furniture in the old days, it would have been classic Chinese, which of course became something that the modern people chose when they could get it.

46) The Treasure Island Fair

Riess: I'll remind you of some other things that were at the Fair. There was [in a section of the decorative arts division called "rooms"] something that was called a "dining room from Finland" designed by Alvar and Aino Marsio Aalto with a table, chair, round table, teawagon with blue tile top, upholstered chair, extra chair, a rug by Loja Saarinen, some [Alberto] Giacomettis, a screen by Picasso. It said, "The furniture was imported by New Furniture, Incorporated."* Now that's the New York importer of the Aalto furniture?

Church: Yes.

Riess: So he must have had some sort of a showroom in New York.

Church: That came afterwards.

Riess: After yours?

Church: Yes, and also by 1939 that was the war you see and things had begun to get a little bit sticky about importing, about getting the stuff here. It used to come by boat, of course. We did have a lot of trouble I remember. Then finally it couldn't be made in Finland anymore. It was made in Sweden during the war.

Riess: And the room was arranged by Beth Armstrong?

Church: Yes, that probably would have been through Bill. Bill was very devoted to Beth Armstrong [decorator with Armstrong, Carter, and Kenyon]. She had a wonderful touch. [Another decorator] Frances Elkins was the sort of glittery, very worldly--

Riess: Glittery or literary did you say?

Church: Glittery. She was kind of a glittering person. Everything she did was very--oh dear, what is the word I'm searching for--Beth Armstrong was very underplayed, very quiet, but beautiful.

Riess: Then there was also a room at the Fair that had furniture that was laminated birch designed by Breuer, also lent by this New Furniture, Incorporated of New York. [And installed by Ernest Born.]

*Information on the Treasure Island Fair, the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, from Decorative Arts Catalog of the Department of Fine Arts.

TERRACES

A SEA SIDE TERRACE

Assembled by the American Institute of Decorators, Southern California District Chapter, William Wilson Wursier, Architect. Installation under the direction of Paul Granard, Carrol Sagar, Hazel C. Hartman and Harold W. Grieve.

Furniture of California redwood and lacquered cane. Designed by Ray See. Manufactured by See Mfg. Co., Los Angeles.

Slip covers of Puerto Rican texture. F. Schumacher & Company, New York.

"Porpoises," polished terracotta sculpture. By Charles B. Lawler, Los Angeles.

"Tithonia and Myosotis," bas-relief background of selected pebbles. By Helen Bruton, Alameda, California.

Walls of precast reinforced concrete building units. Manufactured and installed by Transit Concrete Ltd., of Oakland, a division of the Pacific Coast Aggregates Inc., San Francisco.

Trellis. Supplied by Truscon Steel Co., San Francisco.

OUTDOOR DINING TERRACE

Assembled by Gump's, San Francisco. Designed by Eleanor Forbes, Rudolph Blesh and Leonard Linden.

Dining table of white ash with top of sculptured glass.

Chairs of white oak with seats of woven jute.

Garden light of metal and glass.

Garden table of sculptured glass and metal.

Sunshade of decorated textile. Designed and executed for Gump's by James West, San Francisco.

Place plates of spun brass.

Fiatware.

Candle holders of crystal and brass.

All designed by Eleanor Forbes, San Francisco.

Table glassware. Sculptured glass. Executed by Dorothy Thorpe, Glendale, California.

Ceramic plate. Designed and executed by Jalamovich & Olson, San Francisco.

SPACE FOR LIVING

Designed and assembled by Paul T. Frankl, Los Angeles. Architect, Gardner Dailey, San Francisco.

Table of rattan.

Pair of rattan chairs.

Rattan sofa. Furniture made in the Philippine Islands.

Furniture covering of grass matting. Made in the Philippine Islands.

Welting on cushions and covering of two sofa cushions. From Morton Sundour Co., New York.

Wooden slat umbrella. Manufactured by the Aeroshade Co., Waukesha, Wisconsin.

Umbrella frame. Made by Hollywood Lighting Fixture Co., Los Angeles.

Bamboo shades. From Frankl Galleries, Los Angeles.

★SPORTS TERRACE

Designed and assembled by Richard J. Neutra, A. I. A., San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Two chairs of chromed metal, upholstered in "Frieze" fabric.

One easy chair of chromed metal, upholstered in "Frieze" fabric.

Table of chromed metal with formica top.

Balcony rail of "Alumilite" finish aluminum.

Sandwich tray, "Alumilite" finish aluminum.

Reflector lamp of chromed metal.

Flower bowl of chromed metal. All executed by J. A. Bozung, Los Angeles.

Tile floor. Executed by N. Clark & Sons, San Francisco.

Painting, mural background. Antonio Sotomayor, San Francisco.

LANDSCAPING AND FLOWERS DECORATIVE ARTS

Landscaping designed by Julius L. Girod, Chief, Bureau of Horticulture, Treasure Island.

American Institute of Decorators of Southern California—the William Wurster terrace: Lockwood de Forest.

Paul Frankl-Gardner, Dailey Terrace: Martin and Overlach.

Richard Neutra Terrace: Thomas Church.

Flower Arrangements:

Isabella Wörn.

Members of the—

San Francisco Garden Club.

Garden Club of St. Francis Woods.

Forest Hills Garden Club.

Hillsborough Garden Club.

Garden Club of Palo Alto.

Woodside Garden Club.

Marin Garden Club.

Piedmont Garden Club.

Coordinator:

Margaret Keeley Brown.

Assistant:

Evelyn Arnold.

MONTAGE

By San Francisco Society of Women Artists. Three montages to be exhibited during the year. First montage assembled by Florence Alston Swift. Second montage assembled by Helen Forbes. Third montage assembled by Helen Pauson.

See catalog sections for individual listings of exhibiting artists.



"Tithonia and Myosotis" bas-relief panel, background of selected pebbles; by Helen Bruton

Church: Oh, yes. I don't remember what that was. I know there was a man, whose name I've now forgotten, sort of for awhile we got things through him. But that was not very satisfactory.

Riess: While we're at it, the Giacomettis were lent by Templeton Crocker. The more I looked at the Treasure Island catalog the more things I saw were loaned by Templeton Crocker. Who was Templeton Crocker?

Church: He was an amazing man. I never knew him but I was taken to his apartment--I think he became ill and he lay for years in this apartment. I think I'm right about that, and people would be taken to see it. It was the first apartment in San Francisco that was done by a European. The walls were cork. He imported a marvelous man from Paris [Jean-Michel Frank]. I have a book that has pictures of it, but my eye doesn't light on it. I'll have to find it the next time. He [Frank] was terribly well known. It was very 1920s; that was when it was done.

As I said, I never knew Templeton Crocker, but practically everybody else did. He was rather a precious person. In his heyday he entertained widely and so on. The way we mostly knew him was that his butler, Thomas, all the time that he was still extant and then for a long time afterwards, well, for ages, everybody had him. Whenever we had a cocktail party we'd have Thomas. I think he acted as a valet to quite a lot of gentlemen around town. He worked out of 9 whatchamacallit Green. It was on the top of that apartment on the end of Green Street. I forget who bought that, some needless to say very rich person.

47) Neutra, Et Cetera

Riess: In 1939 there was another show called the Mural Conceptualism that Tommy was in and Neutra apparently also.

Church: Goodness, I remember that name.

Riess: I guess I thought Neutra was Los Angeles.

Church: I think he was chiefly Los Angeles. He did use to come up here.

Riess: There are a couple of places where he and Tommy are associated. Tommy's terrace at Treasure Island was in association with Neutra.

Church: Goodness, I really don't remember too much about that. I remember seeing him socially a great deal at all these architect's parties.

Riess: He did lots of writing, theorizing about new architecture and new space. I wondered if he and Tommy talked much, and how Bill fit into that?

Church: I do remember that wierd title and I never did get it through my head what in heaven's name Mural Conceptualism meant.

I know if Neutra talked a lot and was very vague that would make Tommy terribly nervous. That's why Tommy never worked on any committees or anything like that because it was so wasteful of his time.

Riess: That "Architecture and the Outdoors" section at Treasure Island was introduced by Neutra. [pp. 19-21, Decorative Arts Catalog]

Church: I'll talk to Tommy about Treasure Island. We haven't talked about that for a long time.

Riess: Some of the exhibits were a "seaside terrace," Bill Wurster, architect, an "outside dining terrace," assembled by Gumps, designed by Elinor Forbes.

Church: Oh, yes, of course, I remember her.

Riess: "A space for living"--mostly rattan furniture, it sounds like, that was done by Gardner Dailey. (I'm just listing these to see if some of them have meaning for you.) Something called a "sports terrace," designed and assembled by Neutra, which was mostly metal.

Church: Sounds awful. Bicycle exercycles. [Laughs]

Riess: Then there are three terraces listed in the Landscaping and Flowers Decorative Arts section, which was introduced by Julius Giraud, who was the Chief of the Bureau of Horticulture of Treasure Island.

Church: He was a wonderful horticulturist. Tommy knew him very well.

Riess: So there were three terraces within that. One was a Wurster one which had Lockwood deForest's work.

Church: Oh really. That sounds nice.

Riess: And then [Paul] Frankl and Gardner Dailey.

Church: There was a man called Paul Frankl in Los Angeles who was very slick.

Riess: Martin and Overlach did the landscaping.

- Church: Martin and Overlach--those were the people that in a way were an offshoot from Podesta Baldocchi. They took over the big plants, the house plants and that kind of thing. They verged off from the florist kind of thing. They had a wonderful shop for many years on California Street.
- Riess: And then there was the Neutra terrace that had Tommy's landscape architecture.
- Church: Oh, really. I don't remember that. I'll ask him about that. Yes, I don't remember very much.
- Riess: They must have been peak years.
- Church: Isn't it funny? They just seem like--
- Riess: I mean to have had shows and to be sort of bursting with ideas as it all seemed to have been. Maybe that's just hindsight that makes it look that way.
- Church: You said that the other day about '37 and I've been trying to think in my mind, was '37 such an extraordinary year? I guess it was.
- Riess: Well, it was the year you went to Europe and it was preceded by this San Francisco show. I'm going to leave this museum catalog with you.* Neutra makes a major statement about landscaping in it. He kind of pre-empted the field in a way.
- Church: He was, of course, an elder statesman. He was a very old man compared to these other people.
- Riess: And if you can get Tommy to talk a bit about this "Holiday" design.
- Church: Well, I did ask him about that and he smiled, oh he thought that was wonderful to have that brought to life again. He remembered that very well.

*1937 San Francisco Museum of Art catalog of Contemporary Landscape Architecture.

Interview #6 - May 27, 1977

48) Mural Conceptualism

Riess: Did you ask Tommy about that Mural Conceptualist Show?

Church: Oh, yes, I had that article. Well, I read it out loud to Tommy. And you know that we began to shriek and scream with laughter. Did you read it? Of course, you read it. I said, "This really ought to be--this is satire. It's so funny."

Tommy said he didn't remember anything about it. I said what a terrible name. We both agreed that it must have been Neutra's idea because it sounds just like him exactly. He was very wordy and sort of ponderous and didn't have a ray of humor I always felt, at least that was my impression of him. Nobody could make such a phrase: "Mural Conceptualism!" Then the other person that was engaged in it to some extent was Garrett Eckbo, who also sort of likes that kind of thing.

Riess: But Tommy didn't remember participating in it? There was that little model of his on the second page. And the Florence Allston Swift mural that's in your garden was pictured in the article.

Church: It evidently wasn't a very major thing. Neither of us really could remember very much about it. Isn't that terrible?

Riess: Neutra, even though he seems to have been very much on the scene, was not anybody's pal?

Church: He really wasn't I don't feel. Of course he lived in Los Angeles. There always has been that Mason-Dixon line between San Francisco and Los Angeles. He did come up here a bit. I tell you he was very highly specialized. His houses were extremely expensive for one thing. The finish was very beautiful and all of that.

One house that we did visit that I remember very well was a house up in Oregon. The people that built it I imagine are still there. He was a Dutchman and came over with masses of bulbs.

Church: Evidently the atmosphere up there is very much like Holland. Now everybody that gets bulbs get them from this place--I've forgotten their name now, a Dutch name. His wife was American. She came from New York. They were able to live up to this fantastic thing.

But the [Neutra] houses that I remember the finishes were all perfect. It was very precise. Life had to be very perfect. Everything had to be very perfect. Wasn't he Bauhaus? He really was. But I felt that he was much less fluid and much more rigid perhaps than the others who bent somewhat with the times.

He was a very beautiful man, Neutra was. At the end he became ill and we almost always saw him in a wheelchair. He did that with the greatest flair. He had blue eyes, oh! And always white hair. He must have grown white when he was quite young. He was really quite a spectacular looking person. He always had a lovely blue blanket over his knees.

He may have been very friendly with some of the architects here but I really don't imagine so. I imagine his friendships were really with the people that he'd known in Germany. I can't remember if his wife was German. I don't believe so. I have a feeling she was American.

It's interesting that he was the only one of those--well, he wasn't the only one because [Eric] Mendelsohn came here, but he came much later and really under some duress. Neutra had gotten out of Germany well ahead of all the troubles as some of the people in the East had. But Mendelsohn was a late arrival.

The other person that influenced people to some extent here was Serge Chermayeff.

Riess: But he was in the East, wasn't he?

Church: No, he was here for quite a while. He came here first and he lived in this house one summer.

Riess: You put him up out of the goodness of your heart?

Church: I guess so. He came first during the war.

Riess: And he was brought over by the Architecture Department?

Church: No. I remember Catherine Wurster saying that she had met him in England. I remember her saying that he made it very much of a point that he did want to come. That was before she came out here and was married to Bill. So then when he came why he applied himself immediately to her.

49) Catherine Bauer Wurster, and Bill

Riess: When did you first meet Catherine Bauer?

Church: Tommy met her in 1926 in Europe.

Riess: She was a student traveling also?

Church: No, she had been in Paris for a year living in a French family and learning to speak French. I guess she had contemplated studying architecture and then she veered off from that. I don't believe she ever went to architectural school. After she met Lewis Mumford in New York she became interested in his kind of approach and she began working for him I think and then she realized that that was what her interest was. Then came Roosevelt and the New Deal. That all fitted in very well together so she was a long time in Washington. Then she came out here.

Riess: But all through that she was an acquaintance, somebody you would have visited?

Church: She was an acquaintance of Tommy's. She was always sending postcards to us saying, "Can't we meet," here and there or something, and we never met. She was out here a couple of times and we were always away. So finally we went to a party one night here and as we entered the room Tommy just almost died! Here was Catherine Bauer! And they rushed into each other's arms. We saw a great deal of her.

Actually, I do credit us with having really brought her together with Bill, but you know how people don't ever like that to be said. [Laughs] Bill always resisted the idea that we brought them together very much; he wanted it to be "the hand of fate," as indeed it was.

Riess: You introduced them at a party or something?

Church: Right here. I think early it was very successful. Then when he became ill it was awfully difficult. However, we always were very great friends. I was very devoted to her. I thought she was a wonderful girl.

Riess: I should imagine he had been terribly eligible and pursued all those years.

Church: Yes, he chose marvelous girls to pursue. They evidently never were right for him. He was well into his 30s if not older when he married Catherine. It was just a thing of the times I guess.

- Riess: She certainly was influential in his life. I wondered if she was influential with Tommy?
- Church: No, I don't know whether they really had too much to talk about. And pretty soon after their marriage, and after Sadie was born, they began to travel. She traveled a great deal, she was away an awful lot, and Bill traveled a good bit, too, because he'd be called east on all sorts of projects. So we really didn't see them then. When they moved over to Berkeley we kept in touch, but I didn't see them very often. Tommy saw Bill, of course, on jobs.
- Riess: Well she certainly must have changed the whole direction of his life.
- Church: She did. She brought a much wider scope. He was somebody that had started out doing somewhat private things. Naturally that was extended as it was in Tommy's case. But then when he married Catherine his interests broadened tremendously. He'd always been a Democrat. She was very politically inclined. They became involved in a good many projects of that nature.

And I think that she always had some sort of a post at the University when they came back. She wasn't teaching when they were in the East, but he was. I believe that was Bill's first teaching. He found that he liked it very, very much. He was very popular, I'm sure, because he was very--oh dear, now I want to say the right thing: his speaking was quite marvelous, very simple.

You knew him?

- Riess: Yes, I interviewed him. [For Regional Oral History Office, 1964.]
- Church: Oh, good. Well, then I mustn't struggle to describe him because you know what he was like.
- Riess: Actually I look back at that interview and think he was a very good teacher and he was very straightforward.
- Church: Very. And he thought very clearly. I think I've said before that Tommy has always felt that Bill's drawings were just absolutely the top. He probably would feel that they were the best of anybody that he ever worked with. The clear thought in his mind was translated with perfection. That is sort of rare. People have a hard time. That's like me, I'm struggling now to say exactly what I want to say about his speaking. I've heard him describe things so beautifully.

His manner was rather reserved. He was sort of gentle. Catherine was more dynamic than he was. I believe she was immensely popular with the students, Catherine. She had scores of young people. When

Church: she was here I don't imagine that her influence was as effective as it might have been earlier in the New Deal. She was very much concerned in that.

Riess: I have a little note about Catherine Bauer and Telesis.

Church: Yes, that was another thing that appeared on the horizon. I didn't really follow that closely.

Riess: It must have filled a need for a lot of people. I don't know exactly what it was doing.

Church: I'm afraid it wasn't very effective. All those things, it seems to me, would have to have a leading light.

50) Ruth Jaffe and Marie Harbeck

Riess: The people that were the most active were Burton Cairns who of course then died practically immediately. [1939] And Vernon deMars and Eckbo and Violich and Jack Kent. And Marie Harbeck and Ruth Jaffe, which interested me since they were both in Tommy's office. I'd like to find out more about those two ladies from you.

Church: Well, now isn't it funny? Ruth Jaffe called me just the other day. She wanted to come over and see Tommy. She wrote Tommy a very charming note. She said, "Those years in the office, I look back on them as being the great years." Very charming. She's a very quiet person. She lives in Berkeley. I think she works in Berkeley. She's always been oriented a little bit in city planning or something like that.

Riess: When Ruth Jaffe was in the office, what was her position?

Church: I guess she was a designer. I think she's a landscape architect. And Marie Harbeck was--Tommy almost always drew people from the University of Oregon, it's the funniest thing, time and again he got people from there, and Marie came from the University of Oregon.

Riess: Marie went into private practice?

Church: Marie wanted to go to New York. Tommy wrote the most marvelous letter to people to introduce her so that she'd get a job. She did get a very good job. I remember it was a really charming letter.

Riess: Was she an important addition to the office?

Church: Yes, I think Tommy thought she was very gifted. She was a designer, too. These girls I imagine came as secretaries, but I don't think they did that very long. I think Marie really sort of lived in another plane. She was quite an unusual girl.

Riess: What sort of other plane?

Church: In a world of her own dreams. I think Tommy felt she was very gifted. She ended in Texas, married a landscape architect sort of along in years, and she was by that time somewhat along in years. They had a very lovely life for a very short time then they were killed in an automobile accident. Tommy was very sad about that.

But Ruth Jaffe is still involved in something civic I believe. I don't believe she ever went into private practice.

Riess: What terminated her?

Church: I honestly don't know. You know, during the war Tommy's office was not open except for himself. He kept the office, but he was the only one that was there.

Riess: There was Ruth, and Marie, and June.

Church: Yes, June came before the war. Because she worked with Tommy out at Parkmerced. June came also as a secretary and she remained with Tommy for a long time and was with him at Parkmerced because he was given a job there of superintending the whole layout during the war, which enabled him to keep the office and do any work that there was on weekends and evenings, and then at least he got a living wage during the war and had this office.

Riess: When I was thinking about Parkmerced and looked again at the drawings in one of the Aalto books of worker housing for that pulp company you referred to, the cellulose factory at Sunila, it seemed maybe one could call that an influence on Tommy's work at Parkmerced.

Church: Now we never saw that. Bill saw it.

Riess: You said you saw the drawings for that.

Church: Yes, yes. Tommy certainly did, I remember, he was very much impressed by them. But we never saw it built. But Bill and Catherine went there.

51) The Associates

- Riess: So the office was boiled down to June at that point. Royston I guess had been in the office and then went off to the war.
- Church: Then he came back and he lived with us for awhile.
- Riess: When he came back he didn't come back to Tommy, did he? I thought he went with Eckbo.
- Church: I think he came to Tommy after the war for a little while. Then maybe he went to Eckbo. I honestly don't remember. Also Garrett Eckbo [was in the office]. He wasn't of very long duration in the office, but he was always a great friend, charming.
- Riess: When there were people like Royston and Halprin in the office was that a sort of flirting with having them as a full-time partner?
- Church: Tommy always said that he would never have a partner.
- Riess: Well, then it was planned as a short-term relationship?
- Church: I imagine so. These people were called "associates" after a reasonable time, but he never wanted a partner. They were all people that presumably would go on their own. Of course in the old days landscape architects really didn't have very big offices. They were on a very modest scale in the very early days here anyway. I guess in the east they had more.
- Riess: Then [Doug] Baylis and [Theodore] Osmundsen are two others who were in there briefly.
- Church: I don't think Osmundsen was there very long. Baylis was there quite a while. We saw a lot of him.
- Riess: When Jack Stafford and Casey Kawamoto and Walt Guthrie came, unlike the others they were content to be associates.
- Church: I guess so. I felt Walter was because he had not a terrific drive. He had all the mental equipment and the talent and so on, but I don't think he ever had the drive to go out on his own. I don't think Casey did either.

They left when Tommy looked over the picture of the work and determined that what he really wanted to do was small jobs. [Jack Stafford left in January 1965] He didn't want to do any big commercial work or anything like that, hardly any. And also he always

Church: said that his one indulgence was to take the jobs that he wanted and not to be obliged to do anything that he didn't want. He went over the whole picture with his bookkeeper and she said that he must choose between running a business or doing this. He wanted in other words to have his hand on everything and have the feeling that he was responsible for it.

Walter is a superb draftsman, so he was a marvelous foil for Tommy. Jack--I don't believe that he was really trained in the beginning, I think he came out of the war and he was working in some sort of a plant [nursery] thing. The person realized that he was very, very intelligent. So they called up Tommy and Tommy liked him and took him.

Casey is a charming person and his wife is darling; they were really wonderful. I don't remember when he left. I think it was when Tommy decided to make the office smaller and then that meant that Jack and Casey both must decide if they wanted to go out for themselves. Tommy urged them to very much because he thought that would bring them the greatest fulfillment. Indeed it did.

And, of course, when Walter had to leave the office [January 1947]--that was when Tommy first became ill--that was terribly traumatic. It was just dreadful, because he loved Walter. Walter is just like his left and right hand, and Tommy was just everything to Walter. That was a fearful moment. Then he had to take a job--I don't know, he works for some nice people I guess, but it's nothing at all like Tommy.

Riess: It seems like it would be very useful to have Walter right now.

Church: Well, I guess he really couldn't afford to have both Walter and Grace. Tommy always paid awfully big salaries. That was what he felt he should do. He never paid any attention to what other people pay. Occasionally I hear what other people pay and I'm just staggered. Because that was never Tommy's idea.

Riess: Is Grace a landscape architect?

Church: No, she is not. But she is very intelligent and she's very artistically inclined. She has certain things that she can fulfill. She relies totally on Tommy. Well, I wish we could have Walter. I just adore Walter. He's a wonderful human being.

Riess: I'm sure that more and more people are wanting to know who they should turn to [to have gardens designed].

Church: That's very difficult because there just isn't anybody. Now Jack Stafford has moved down to Woodside, down in the country. There's just loads of work; or there has been, I don't think there is just now. But I've gotten the impression that people perhaps thought that they were going to get an image of Tommy, and they didn't, how could they? You know you can't pass that sort of thing that he has on to somebody else. Do you think?

Riess: No.

Church: Who has ever been someone that absolutely stepped into the shoes of another person? I've never heard of it. Everyone feels Tommy is a unique person. I guess he is.

Riess: [Laughs] We sit here saying that so coolly. Well, yes, of course, he is.

Church: I guess so. I've often thought--everybody always thought that I didn't really appreciate Tommy. I do appreciate Tommy, but I've always turned away a little bit from what goes on in the profession an awful lot, wives who extol their husbands in every possible way.

It's for other people to make those statements. You can either agree or not agree or look smug or do whatever you like, but don't make the statements yourself. Tommy would have hated it if I'd been that way anyway. If anybody's going to make those remarks, he'll make them. He feels quite confident about his work, what he's done.

Riess: I think often wives don't know all the struggle, whereas other people observe it differently and see accomplishments as being much more triumphs than you would.

Church: I think that's absolutely true. I wasn't privy to all of his ideas and designs and things. Of course I saw a lot of them. I was awfully lucky. He told me a lot of the things that had happened and so on, and the people talked a great deal. Naturally I didn't know very many people that were unhappy with what Tommy had done. They wouldn't come to me necessarily. I suppose he had experiences that weren't agreeable. You couldn't very well be in business as long as he was and not.

I realize now that I'm in this position [interviewee] that this work [oral history] if you can call my part of it work, is helping me to realize how much I have learned about his life and his work which I have never really just sat down and thought about much. I realize, too, that now I can identify certain things--lots of time I wouldn't have any idea why he would do a certain thing--now I can see it and I can put it against other examples and so forth. Well, I've had a very fortunate life to have been exposed to all these things.

52) A Beautiful Visitor

Church: Oh, I must tell you a charming thing that happened just a little while before you came. I went out to put my car in the garage and the garage door was open. I was just going toward it to press the button and close it when I saw a taxi stop in the middle of Hyde Street. Two ladies got out. The taxi man was sort of gesticulating.

The two ladies went toward the gate. They looked through the little window. As I was standing at the garage door I said to them, "Is there somebody you're looking for?" But with the noise of the street and everything, they didn't hear me.

Then one of them opened the gate and stepped in. So then I went up to them. I said, "Can I help you?" I looked and the forward one, the one that was sort of taking charge, was Julie Harris!

I looked at her and you know it all happened so quickly and it was so strange because I've always admired her tremendously. I've never met her though I know she's a cousin of Betty Stephenson's, who was Betty Gayley. I've known the family forever because it was Mrs. Gayley's family. (She was Mrs. Gayley's niece.) She was with a young woman that I presume is working with her or something.

I looked at her and she was simply beautifully charming, and beautifully made-up. Her face was just absolute perfection! I said, "But you are--" before I knew what I was saying.

And she said, "I am Julie Harris."

"But of course. I know you. And I've seen you and I admire you so much." I said, "I'm a childhood friend of Betty Stephenson." So she smiled and said, "Yes." I was so sort of amazed and really quite thrilled, and I didn't even say who I was.

She said, "We're just making a tour of San Francisco and we just had a few hours this afternoon and the taxi man said we must see this place."

I said, "Well please come in."

She said, "Is this your house and garden?"

I said, "Yes." Then I suddenly realized, I said, "I haven't introduced myself. I'm Betsy Church and my husband is a landscape architect." I don't think she remembered that her mother and father both knew Tommy. They they exclaimed [over the garden].

Church: Because Tommy was just about to go out and there was a lot of confusion, I didn't invite them into the house. But anyway, they did look in the garden. "Oh," she said, "isn't this beautiful!" She was simply adorable! And wasn't that interesting that it was the taxi man who brought them there? I'm so glad I didn't miss her! It would have been so easy to have missed her. Extraordinary! [Julie Harris was performing in San Francisco in "The Belle of Amherst."]

53) Frank Lloyd Wright

Riess: I wanted to ask you about how Tommy got associated with Frank Lloyd Wright on the house in Carmel.

Church: Oh, now that's a very cute story. Mrs. Walker, now Mrs. Van Loben Sels, a very elderly lady, and always a wonderful lady, shortly after the war she came to Tommy. She had acquired a really beautiful property at Carmel.

The Walker family had owned for many years a whole town up in the northern part of California that was nothing but lumber, a lumber-town and they were always said to be sort of land poor. (It's Harriet Henderson's mother.) They weren't poor, but they didn't evidently have access to the millions that they now have. When all these things transpired and the lumber town was bought, and they got a lot of money, Mrs. Walker decided she wanted Frank Lloyd Wright to build a house for her. She didn't really know him, so she suggested to Tommy that he write him a letter.

Tommy had met him, but [Wright] always sort of ignored Tommy. At any rate, Tommy wrote him this letter. It was quite long and detailed and Tommy approached him as if he were approaching royalty really, in a very dignified manner--"Yours very sincerely" or something like that.

There was quite a difference between the letters, in fact Wright's was not a letter, it was a telegram. Tommy had said, "Would you consider it?" and so forth.

The reply from Frank Lloyd Wright just simply said, "Dear Church: Why not?" I thought that was awfully cute. Frank Lloyd Wright was very witty, could be witty. Anyway, Tommy didn't work, you know, cheek by jowl with Frank Lloyd Wright, because that wasn't Frank Lloyd Wright's style at all.

Riess: Was that a case where Tommy got in on the siting?

Church: Honestly I don't remember. I don't really think he had terribly much to do with it.

Riess: Just providing the introduction.

Church: I think he brought them together. I don't remember his talking about being in on any conferences or anything like that. Really I think Mrs. Walker left it almost completely to Frank Lloyd Wright, with the result that it had some of the most amazing omissions and additions. [Laughter]

One of the omissions was that there was no back door and no possible place for anybody to get the garbage or anything unmentionable out of the house except out through the front door. So the village carpenter had to be called in after Frank Lloyd Wright had left the job [laughter] and he hastily sawed a hole so the garbage people could get in and out.

Then, the scale of his house is always minute because he was so tiny so he didn't think anybody required more.

Riess: I didn't know that.

Church: Oh, yes. He was quite small. He and Willis Polk were both minute and the scale of their houses is very much in their scale. The doorways are always very low. I used to hear people complain about the bathrooms, that they couldn't turn around and so on [laughs].

I guess Tommy helped with the planting. I would imagine that Frank Lloyd Wright sited that house entirely himself because it's just like a ship, you know, heading out to sea. As I say, I never heard of Tommy being in on conferences with him. Maybe he was. I'll ask him. He always admired him. He thought he was very entertaining.

We never went to Taleisin. When I was down in Arizona I kind of wish that I had because I thought, "Oh, dear, that's one of the things one really should have seen in life." I heard about it so often. I certainly wouldn't have wanted to have gone and stayed there. It must have been a traumatic experience. His draftsmen were said to drag themselves more dead than alive to the drafting boards at night after they'd been through all sorts of plowing. And the wives made all the jams and jellies and goodness knows what that they consumed during the winter months, or the summer months or however the seasons were.

Riess: It sounds like a utopian community.

Church: It wasn't utopian. These young people paid a lot of money to go there. Today it's very expensive, and it's still run by his widow, who's a sort of a fantastic character. There has to be a string quartet through dinner because he insisted on having music through dinner.

There were awfully funny stories. Eric Mendelsohn told about going there and Frank Lloyd Wright showed him all over. They came to the door of the drafting room and all the boys were bending over their drawings. Eric turned to Frank Lloyd Wright and he said, "Well, Frank, I see you are making little Frank Lloyd Wrights."

And Frank Lloyd Wright drew himself up to his full height and he said, "Eric, there are no little Frank Lloyd Wrights." [Laughs] But you know the sad thing is there's nothing but. No one has ever emerged from that school, has there? Has there ever been a really great, exciting architect that's come out?

Riess: Isn't Soleri from that?

Church: Yes. I told you I went there [Arcosanti] to see him. I didn't, however, go to see the great city. But I saw that he's doing very much the same sort of thing that Frank Lloyd Wright did. He has the students and they're all with the long hair and dragging around. The dust was blowing and it was all sort of half-finished and didn't look as if it would ever be finished. Things grew up out of nothing. There were caves.

I couldn't get any real feeling about it. I was looking at it without Tommy. I really prefer to have him isolate what--because after all he is a trained expert and he could put his finger on things and I then in my foolish way could sort of fill in. I'm not a judge really.

Riess: That is a result of training, that you can isolate the form of something

Church: Exactly. I can't do that. No one ever has trained me.

Tommy doesn't know Soleri. I guess they have a model and a book about Arcosanti. That was displayed here. Did you happen to see it?

Riess: Yes.

Church: Well, it was most confusing. The model was there, but I could not get anything out of it. And that night I had the most extraordinary nightmare. I really did. I never have a nightmare but I was just motivated by having seen that. I was in this weird house and I was trying to get out and I'd go out a window and then I--I couldn't. Yet I'm used to looking at fairly new sort of things.

Church: This man Lewis Ruskin [see pages 429-431] said Wright was a very gifted man, but he was utterly impossible. I've always heard that he was awfully difficult to work with. He's very bossy.

I'll never forget being in Paris, shortly after the war, when Wright was being honored at the Beaux Arts. It was the first time that the Beaux Arts had ever asked a foreign architect to display his drawings. I was with this American woman. We got there and the students were all lined up outside because they were waiting for him to arrive. His car came and he got out. He was dressed in his cape and wearing his great big ring which he always had--and like a pope he used to extend it to kiss it. He had the proudest, most unappealing effect really.

These students were so worshipfull that they really were ready to bend their knee. In fact I'm not sure some of them didn't, especially if they were going to catch him in a photograph or something. He never looked to the right or the left. He just didn't give an inch. He swept into the Beaux Arts and as far as I know he never spoke to any of them. It was so funny.

54) House Beautiful

Riess: How did your association with House Beautiful begin?

Church: Well, Elizabeth Gordon got in touch with Tommy. She wrote to him. She had seen some things in Sunset or something. Then she began to publish Tommy very early.

Riess: It is an eastern magazine.

Church: Yes, it's a Hearst magazine. There were the two magazines: House and Garden and House Beautiful. House and Garden is Condé Nast and House Beautiful is Hearst. I always felt, and I think many other people did, too, that the old-fashioned taste, less of the dynamic exciting new things, features and so on, were in House and Garden. That was more the old things, and the houses and gardens and things that were photographed were apt to be established and very beautiful.

Elizabeth Gordon was--and is, she's retired but she's very lively--very, very far ahead of her time. Her magazine, House Beautiful, brought out things that were going to be recognized. I saw a great deal of her because we traveled together and I was very much impressed and drawn to her. She was interesting because she

Church: was so totally different from us, and yet she had this far-seeing understanding of Tommy's work. She is really a very brilliant woman, I think, but, you know, lots of geniuses are peculiar, and she just is a little bit peculiar.

I think back over so many things that she said. They were very far, very far-seeing, very far ahead. She saw changes that were coming and brought them out in the magazine.

Riess: In lifestyle?

Church: Lifestyle, and she was very much concerned with the kind of living. She was crazy about California because she felt that was the way and of course she's been proven so right. She felt that Tommy was the exponent of that here in the garden world. Of course, that's really been proven.

Riess: The exponent of the indoor-outdoor living kind of thing?

Church: Yes, and the reduction of maintenance and all of that.

Riess: I should think that if Sunset featured him first that that would be exactly what they would latch on to.

Church: Yes, that is. She may have seen his things there at first. That I don't honestly know.

Anyway, they met fairly early on, by the end of the war, and he did her garden in the east. Then we saw her a great deal. She used to come out here and visit.

Riess: How about writing for the magazine?

Church: Yes, he did quite a bit of writing. Then when he published the book, House Beautiful gave him all the prints, all the colored photographs and everything. They were just handed to the publisher. But then, of course, they ceased to publish it.

Riess: Oh, they went from House Beautiful to the publisher--

Church: --so we haven't got them. They said they couldn't reprint them. I don't know whether that was true. I'm told that it probably wasn't; they just didn't want to. Pretty soon the book world began to change and now the book people today don't want to reprint, they want to print something new because they think they have more of a chance of making money on a new item.

- Church: Now this book [Gardens are for People] is just so desirable, everybody wants it. It did go into several editions, but everyone said it should never have been allowed to go out of print. To me it's a terrible tragedy. I just wish it could be redone. But I don't know how. Also the publishers hold the copyright, which I understand isn't ordinarily done. That's not cricket. The writer usually has the copyright. But the copyrights do run out. So maybe this one's run out.* But I thought one time I'd take it to Japan and have it reprinted or something.
- Riess: In a talk in 1971, Tommy said about his work on the east coast, "After all I'm 3,000 miles away. They saw something in House Beautiful so the fact that my fees are twice as much as the local guy doesn't matter." In other words, that having had something published--**
- Church: Yes, it's quite interesting because there would sometimes be requests from--well, one of his jobs that was quite fascinating and thrilling at the time was a job in Salvador. She had seen his things in House Beautiful.

55) "Who Else Worked That Hard?"

- Riess: It must have been a nuisance though, all the writing and the photographing. I mean there must have been reasons why other landscape architects don't do that.
- Church: Now I don't know about other people really, but I don't think there was anyone that devoted as much time to his work as Tommy did because he was practically never home. There were many years when we rose from the dinner table and Tommy went down to the office. If he got going on something he'd be there until 2 o'clock in the morning. (And in those days we never locked the door and I'm sure he never locked the door of the office. Just imagine where the office is!) And I would wake up about 2 o'clock and he wasn't home. Then I'd call the office and if they didn't answer there, then I wouldn't know whether he had left or what. You know, it was really sort of eerie. But I don't think very many people that I can think of worked as hard as he did. And vacations and weekends. Saturdays and Sundays, my heavens, he was never here.

*See Grace Hall interview.

**Northern California Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects, February 9, 1971.

Riess: In the same talk someone asked him, "You have established your name as a landscape architect on an international basis. Have you developed a formula of activity which led to this? A process or a program?" And Doug Baylis answered for him: "The moment that you have gardens made and some good photographs, it follows. He photographed his own gardens. He works and turns out gardens. Who else does that?"

Church: Isn't that cute, yes.

Riess: And that does seem very pointed it seems to me.

Church: Yes, well I think he lived and breathed his gardens. I'm sure there must have been disappointing things in all of that that happened, but I never was conscious of it. And if there were, he never dwelled on them or he certainly never told me.

Riess: Maynard Parker was the photographer for House Beautiful?

Church: Yes, he did a lot of photographing for House Beautiful and he became a great friend. I'll tell you who Tommy adored, though, in the early days, was Roger Sturtevant. He retired when he was very much too young really. He lives up in Glen Ellen. But he is a marvelous photographer.*

Riess: And Roy Partridge was another of the photographers?

Church: Yes.

Riess: Would Tommy call these photographers or would the magazine commission them?

Church: I think Elizabeth had Maynard. She was a great friend and he was a great friend of hers. If she ever saw a photograph that she liked, well then she'd get it. But I don't think she ever ordered Partridge. I don't know that Partridge did too much work for Tommy. I really don't remember.

56) Tommy the Photographer

Church: Tommy was very interested in doing his own work. He's having a very hard time now because he wants to have a lot of things photographed. He has several people that have sort of offered themselves. They're going out and photographing. But I don't know that he's actually settled on anybody as yet. I think it must be awfully hard because he must see things that they don't.

*Interviewed, in Vol. I.

Riess: I was interested, after having seen your travel books, to find how details Tommy had photographed have been used in this book [Gardens are for People], like the lichen-covered ball on the top of the balustrade and the window in the chateau.

Church: With the bird's nest in it?

Riess: Yes, right, and a little bit of crumbling wall.

Church: Charming. And years ago when we first used to go to New York I remember his photographing out of the windows the paving of the streets. I began to look at pavings. When I first lived in Paris I remember the cobblestones and how I adored them. Then people said, "Oh, we hate these cobblestones. They're so dangerous and your heels sink down into them." That never occurred to me; they were just so beautiful that I never would have thought of criticizing them.

And then I always liked brick. I hated the smooth cement. Of course the brush cement with the pebbles, the concrete and all, that's very pretty. I thought smooth cement was just the most horrible material you could possibly use. I still think so.

Riess: He was photographing the paving of the streets of New York or Europe?

Church: New York. Yes, he used to lean out of the hotel window. We used to stay in the little hotel that was near the Metropolitan. Across, the sidewalk that runs along 5th Avenue, borders the park, has some awfully pretty either cobblestones or something like that. Maybe they're still there. I don't know. But there must be some photographs.

And I remember one time we were in Guatemala and we watched some natives laying bricks in the courtyards. Tommy began photographing, and the man was just astounded. He just felt himself to be a humble artisan and Tommy felt he was a great artist.

Riess: Well, then, he has taken care of photographing details through the years.

Church: Oh, yes. Oh, indeed he has. I just can't tell you. He's working on these photographs now. He started doing that last week. He has a lot of them up here. Then, of course, he has tons more in the office. He keeps getting out all the photographs and sort of dividing them up, putting them into folders and so forth. So we've been going through quite a lot of nostalgia. [Laughs]

57) -- And Poet, and Designer

Church: Tommy had a letter recently from a man in Southern California contratulating him on the ASLA award. He said he had seen the slide show and thought it was wonderful. He said, "You won't remember me, but I was in some of your classes when you were teaching briefly at the University of California, and what a wonderful sense of direction it gave to us."

He said, "I have a squash partner. We play in the evenings. He gave me a present the other day. It is a booklet that I'm sure you'll recall. It is called 'Beyond the Rim' by Thomas Dolliver Church. It was published in 1921."

Have you ever seen it?

Riess: No.

Church: Well, this is amusing. I'll see if I can put my hand on one. They gradually disappeared over the years. When he was 16 years old his poems were gathered together, his boyhood poems, and put in this cunning little book and privately printed.

Riess: By whom were they put together?

Church: I don't remember. Maybe he did it himself.

Riess: Oh, I think that's just excellent.

Church: It's awfully cute. I'll look for it and show it to you the next time.

This man had said he had no idea that Tommy also was a poet. I wrote to him and said--I was answering his letter--that I was awfully pleased that he liked them. I said I was also surprised that Tommy was a poet because he never mentioned them to me. But I did find a clutch of them at the bottom of an old trunk one time. Anyway it was very charming.

Riess: I scribbled a note to ask about the birdfeeder type design for the lighting fixtures in oak trees on the Stanford and Berkeley campuses.

Church: Those are not Tommy's designs. No, that is a light that I think he's used for a long time. He thinks it's the most harmonious. It's a very highly thought of and probably expensive light, but it isn't as if he had designed that.

Beyond the Rim

THOMAS DOLLIVER CHURCH

PUBLISHED BY

The Cora L. Williams Institute for Creative Education
Thousand Oaks, Berkeley, California
1921

Beyond the Rim

+

*Voice from the silent mazes,
Beyond the rim,
Struggling for shape, dimension
In the dim
Unconsciousness. Be free!
We know the fearsome faces,
The awe — the glory!
In the unknown places
We grasp, blindly,
What force is this?—
Or that?
It does not matter,
We are bound in one.
Master!*

[7]

My Masterpiece

With great care I planned
My masterpiece.
With terrible accuracy
I chose my words, my phrases —
For it was to be masterful,
It was to be vivid, delicate,
Subtle, powerful.
I would question the existence of things,
I would tear down every belief of man and
build again.
I would thunder at the gates of the incredible
And flood the world with a new light of
understanding
And it would be masterful.
Men would be amazed,
The world would be amazed,
God would be amazed.
And then — after weeks and months
It was finished.
I groped in vast untrammelled spaces,
Found other worlds, other universes;
Struggled with vague forces,
Dared infinite gods —
It was my masterpiece.
I loved it and wept over it.

[22]

But men shook their heads.
Here was an idler
With nothing to do but dream,
And to question the very foundation
Upon which they
Built their existence.
They did not see my vision —
They saw me,
And so they shook their heads.

I laid it away.
Then one day
With nothing else to do
I let my pen wander,
Amused.
It was — I forget — something about sun-
shine,
And winds, and new-made nests,
And singing flowers.
An hour perhaps — and I forgot it.

But men acclaimed a masterpiece!
They depicted a subtleness I had not
dreamed of.
It was a vision,
Daring, vivid, powerful.
It was my vision —
It was my masterpiece!

[23]

Church: Now the lights that he did design are these lights in our garden. Have you ever seen those when they've been on? They're very charming. They were inspired by the sort of fun fair place in Copenhagen, Tivoli, and they have the smallest light globes possible.

Tommy also designed our chandelier in the hall which you must look at. If you are ever driving by here at night, it's always on. You get the most charming view in that little pointed window; this thing just swings in the window so that from the street you see it. It's really very charming.

Riess: Did he design any outdoor furniture?

Church: There is some outdoor furniture that he designed for one of the gardens at the Fair. We always intended to have it made, but he never did.

In the thirties there was this terrific thing of floodlights. People embedded a floodlight and then it shot up into the top of the oak tree and startled the birds in their nests and startled the people, too. I always thought they were perfectly hideous. I remember that when we went to Tivoli we had a conversation about that. I said to Tommy, "Oh, I find these so delightful"--I think they have the same wattage but divided amongst several globes instead of having just one terrible globe that always hits you in the eye.

Interview #7 - January 27, 1978

58) Tommy's Work in the Northwest

Riess: Our discussion today should be about Tommy's work after 1950.

Church: Most of the work that came through clients in those years was work on established things. Two of his great gardens in the fifties and sixties were the famous ones up in the Seattle area that Tommy worked on for many years, Wagner and Bloedel. Maybe there had been an original concept of them, perhaps stemming from the architect, because both of the houses were done by very good architects.

While Tommy worked over different parts of them, he always had the main lines of the garden in mind with a view of the plant growth and the trees and all the surround of the Northwest, which was an area in which he hadn't really worked very much, I don't think. He hadn't worked in exactly that--he worked for [Pietro] Belluschi, he did some jobs with Belluschi when he was still in the Northwest, and another man, but those were modern houses, and it was still at the period when the great European influence had not expanded as later in the fifties and sixties.

Riess: By the great European influence, you mean--

Church: Almost like some of the parks. Well, those two particular gardens are very park-like. I mean, one is like a big English garden and the other one is like entering a French park. And they really are large pieces of property.

Riess: And was there an earlier landscape architect associated with those gardens?

Church: Other people had been consulted. The Bloedel house was designed by owner Bertram Collins, a decorator. And its terraces and the entrance, etc., were outlined by Collins in the manner of the French architects.

The Wagner house was remodeled by William Platt of New York. That was a more informal, natural garden. It had the air of having been created by the original owner, a garden lover of great taste.

Church: I remember that when Tommy was first working at the Wagners' Bill Platt was still doing the house over.

Riess: P-l-a-t-t?

Church: Yes, he was Charles Platt's son. There are two sons, and I think they're still active. No, I'm sure they're retired, but they're the kind of people that would never stop working. They're absolutely marvelous. Tommy did many things with Bill in the New York area.

Riess: And so it was through him that he met the Wagners?

Church: No, no. He met the Wagners and the Bloedels through the Benoists who had become friends through the work at Almaden and Paicenes, who told them to call to get in touch with Tommy, and so they both did.

Riess: In a garden of that scale were there new principles that he applied to that situation? (The old challenge had been to make a pleasant living space for a fairly urban situation.)

Church: I have a feeling that that was just exactly what it was--deleting your word "urban" in this case. Pleasant certainly, and agreeable to the wishes and tastes of the owners, who were both blessed with great taste. (This may always have come first with Tommy.) But of course with attention paid to the prospect, which must please.

The jobs he did in the East were often a little bit more elaborate--classic?--in a way, because it was usually the people with more vision that would have heard of Tommy and think of importing somebody from California. And possibly they had more money to spend. I remember in the early days it was often said that Tommy was very expensive to have in the East. Tommy found this amusing. It was the architects, in the twenties, before the Depression and before everything changed so extraordinarily, that "set" the house and did all the terraces and indicated what should happen in the garden.

They did not have landscape architects then, just as they didn't here, really. They were very few and far between. The charming Italian man who lived on Long Island, Innocenti, he had an office that survived the Depression. But there were very few, two or three that I can think of, and Tommy brought sort of a fresh view, I think, to the picture.

He did some of Ed Stone's residences. He worked in a diversity of--he had no one style, really. He did work on a lot of different kinds of projects.

Church: But I started to say that out here the people that were beginning to build the houses that were going to house themselves and their families for "x" number of years really wanted a lot of things. All of them wanted a swimming pool, and they wanted tennis courts, and they wanted a variety of activities on the place. And if they happened to be particularly drawn towards gardening--everybody wasn't, and also it was a moment when people hadn't begun to have all that money, so they didn't think in terms of gardening either because, in the first place, you could hardly get gardeners, and in the second place, when you again could get them, they were very, very expensive. Even the Basque shepherders turned gardeners had become very expensive.

Riess: This is, I think, the Wagners' swimming pool [Your Private World, p. 141].*

Church: That's the Wagners' pool, yes.

Riess: It looks like it could be just a small decorative pool in the middle of the garden.

Church: Yes.

Riess: And yet this is a swimming pool that's 40 feet from side to side.

Church: It doesn't look so large, of course, because it's in that quatrefoil pattern, and it's all flat so that you just look at it practically from eye level.

Riess: Is the whole garden done in this style, or are other areas quite different?

Church: This is just one area. For instance she has a charming knot garden which I think was the last thing that Tommy did for her. That's off of the sort of garden terrace near the kitchen.

Riess: Would he accept labeling this garden as truly classical and formal or would he feel accused?

Church: I don't think Tommy ever felt "accused." Of course I never knew Tommy really as a client, but I never heard him denounce anything; I mean, unless it were really ghastly. If he made sort of a turning-away gesture, then it wasn't very obvious that it was ghastly, but I knew that he just thought that was beyond--but that didn't happen very often.

*Your Private World, by Thomas D. Church, San Francisco Chronicle Books, 1969.

Church: People used to say that somebody or other had copied Tommy. I don't think that was ever really true. But Tommy always said, well, he couldn't think of anything more complimentary because in the first place, he said, there is absolutely nothing that hasn't been done, you know, somewhere.

Riess: Under the sun.

Church: And the thing that is important anyway isn't that. He laid great stress on scale, and I think he tried very hard to teach that, and it's obvious that you just can't teach it because so few people really have it.

59) More About the Garden at 2626 Hyde Street

Riess: You said that you were never a client, but in a letter that I have from Joseph Howland, he says [reading from letter], "I have a hunch that the re-do of his own garden, as shown in House Beautiful under byline Thomas Church, really brought him the most pleasure. His wife was a super-demanding client. Or call her an impossible client. Yet the garden re-do pleased Tommy as much as it did her."

Church: Isn't that amusing!

Riess: I think you'll have to respond to that.

Church: That's awfully funny. I really don't remember that. You know, the things that I don't remember; it's just terrible. It shows how, oh, desperately important it is to write down. I don't care if you fling it out of the window at the end of your life, but you really should write everything down, because now so much of it is just gone.

Riess: Well, but you probably remember the process of working on this garden out front.

Church: I never had very much to do with any of the gardens. I really didn't. I really was a bystander, and I never suggested anything, because I--

Riess: But this garden was done for you.

Church: Well, yes. I guess everything here, both the places, was done for me. I certainly appreciated it. It's funny, we had a hard time remembering the other garden; we have to be reminded of it by pictures. But yet I loved the other garden.

Church: I remember John Yeon said a wonderful thing. When this garden was first done he came to see it and he said, "Now, Betsy, you have a formal entrance and an informal garden." And he said, "Before, what you had was a formal garden and an informal entrance."

In the original garden, the front walk ran along the side of the flats next door and then attached to a miserable little staircase that came up like this [gestures], and then you turned to the left, and then you encountered the front door, so that the front door had no setting or anything, you know, and it always bothered me terribly. But then I never really understood why, but I thought that was a wonderful way to put it.

Riess: Yes. Well, when did it become obvious that a new garden must be made?

Church: Well, I'll tell you. One summer we were in France, and we had never been together at Fontainebleau and we went there. It's not at all like the Italian villas. It's not grandiose. It is sort of simple and domestic in a way. The staircase certainly was simple; it was almost that you could envision having it. And I said to Tommy, "Now, that to me is a pretty staircase. Wouldn't it be fun to do that at home?" And he said, "Well, it would."

When we got home, he went out to a wrecker's and he found this double stair. It was an interior stair, this railing and all of that. I think it actually is golden oak or something underneath and it has that sort of turn-of-the-century decoration on it.

He got that, and we had this wonderful old contractor that used to work for us, and Tommy said he just had to have him. He had retired to an old man's home, but he was allowed to come out in order to construct, to make the staircase so that it would work, with the entrance. And I think that was the thing that then brought about the change of the garden.

Riess: And did Tommy keep checking with you, the client, on the details of it?

Church: Oh, no. Oh, no. Never! Oh, never! [Laughter]

Riess: Or was it just surprise? Well, isn't that funny that Mr. Howland's sense of you is that you were very demanding.

Church: I don't know where he got that feeling that I was a dominant figure. Well, I'm flattered, but I don't think it's true.

Riess: And he also said he always gathered that Jerd Sullivan was probably Tommy's favorite client.

Church: Mrs. Jerd Sullivan. Well, I imagine he talked a great deal about her at that time. I don't think Tommy ever had a "favorite client." It was always the client of the hour, the one that he was working for at the moment. It's like a writer; their favorite thing is what they're working on right at that moment.

And he had the most remarkable clients! I can hardly think-- I'm sure that other people--but, you see, the young people, the young men coming along today, they won't ever know that, that feeling, because first of all they don't get that kind of job, and in order to keep themselves alive I guess they have to do a lot of commercial work, which must be abominable.

Riess: Well, it seems to me that one thing that would make a person Tommy's most favorite client would be that the person would be most involved in the process.

Church: Exactly.

Riess: I can't imagine most professionals allowing that much involvement from their client.

60) The Garden Designer Women

Church: Oh, they haven't got time, and they don't have that kind of a job. You know, really, much of the kind of work that Tommy did is now going to--well, have you heard of somebody called Jean Wolff?

Riess: Yes, yes.

Church: She has a lovely garden that Tommy did years ago.

She's never been professionally trained. She's a perfectly delightful person who's always loved gardening. When her husband died and she sort of reached a turning point in her life, she found herself with a little gathering of the young matrons who didn't want to spend a lot of money and also they wanted to learn--just the way young people today want to learn about cooking--they wanted to learn everything they could about gardening. With some it takes; they become the most marvelous gardeners. With others it doesn't.

But meanwhile Jean has provided this perfectly marvelous liaison. Big construction--when she got something that she couldn't really envision, she always brought it to Tommy. Sometimes they worked things

Church: out together, and sometimes he worked on the constructed part of the job. In a way she is like Isabella Worn, who had the sense of the flowers and the plants. Have you ever seen Jean Wolff's garden?

Riess: Yes.

Church: Don't you think it's just beautiful?

Riess: Yes. Well, of course. But it's Tommy's design.

Church: Yes, but then she keeps it. To me it's like a--well, a shrine is being a little sentimental. But she keeps it alive and nourished, and it's so beautiful. It's always so beautifully kept.

Riess: Yes. She really understands what she's doing.

Church: Of course, she has a full-time gardener who lives on the place. She and her sister share the garden and then they share the gardener.

Riess: Does she understand scale, though, in the way that Tommy really understands it?

Church: I think she does, though that I'm not absolutely certain, I don't have too much experience. She would be the first to say that she did or didn't, because she's very modest, but she's very sure of what she does know. About ten years ago she started having classes and now it's quite a going thing in San Francisco.

This last month two young ladies came to San Francisco without any warning. One of them just telephoned and said she was here, poor thing, in the midst of all the terrible storms and everything. She was an English girl who has been married to an architect and they're now separated and she has these children, so she's not in her twenties precisely, and she decided that she wanted to become a landscape architect. She's been going to an horticultural college or something in England and knows a lot about horticulture. Obviously in England that would be one of the big parts of your education, I think.

Riess: Yes.

Church: Anyway, she arrived for a week's stay and said that she wanted to see as many of Tommy's gardens as she could possibly see, and preferably the small town gardens. Well, the rain was coming down. Several times it was raining so hard when we were taking her around that we had to stop and go under a tree. You know, that storm was just unbelievable.

Church: She had landed in Los Angeles and she'd come up to Santa Barbara and it was such a shame she had no preparation. Of course today, you know, people don't give out their names on lists of people with beautiful gardens or anything like that; the profile is very, very low here, both north and south. And so she was in Santa Barbara for two days and she couldn't see anything because we didn't know anything about her; she hadn't gotten in touch with us and we couldn't tell her. She had gone to the city hall; well, of course, they wouldn't have known anything about anything.

Riess: That's true, yes.

Church: It's so sad because there were several people that certainly would have been very happy to show her their gardens down there.

And then the other day I met a most charming French girl, perfectly adorable, and she was here visiting her parents, and she wanted to see everything she could of Tommy's. We didn't have time to go around very much, but she went to the office and looked at a lot of the photographs. And she has this same kind of a job [as Jean Wolff] that she does. She has a little car. She has no overhead at all. Her car's full of tools and soil and herself, and she goes around to people's gardens. She lives in Orlando, Florida, and she's as busy as she can possibly be. She was just charming.

Riess: But she's not a landscape architect.

Church: She's not. You see, they're not really trained. I mean, their eye isn't trained, you see. Tommy always used to speak of the dirt gardener, and these are, well, let's say several steps up from that. And also their forte is horticulture, which Tommy's never was.

Osgood Hooker, a darling friend of ours who was a tremendous horticulturist and a completely opposite kind of person from Tommy, always made the most terrific jokes about Tommy. He said that he barely could recognize a geranium.

Riess: Who is Osgood Hooker?

Church: Oh, he was an adorable person. Tommy did his garden in the old days down in Burlingame. He was really a superb person. He had graduated in architecture and worked as a gentleman architect, the last one that we've ever heard of, and the only one I ever heard of here, in Arthur Brown's office. He worked there for many years and never took a salary. His family was wealthy and they had everything all figured out. It was going to last forever; their world was going to last forever. And so Osgood never had to work, and by the time we knew him he had just about given up going to Arthur Brown's except if he wanted

Church: to build an addition to his woodshed or something down in Hillsborough. Tommy worked for him and we were great friends and we traveled together a lot.

He did laugh about Tommy, but Tommy made no bones about it. Naturally over the years he learned a great deal about plants, but, for instance, when he went to a place in the East, how could he suddenly know all the plants there in that short time? So, he had to rely on others and he did.

Another friend of ours who was also very witty said that Tommy-- they were talking about how Tommy used to do the moving of stones, and he said that if you had a great big rock in your garden already, in the property, that he had to order that removed at hideous expense, but if you didn't have one, then he had it brought in. [Laughter]

61) Architect Associates of the Fifties and Sixties

Riess: I'd like your recollections of Tommy's response to working with some architects other than Wurster, with Esherick, for instance.

Church: Maybe he did some jobs with Joe. I really sort of can't think of them.

Riess: John Funk?

Church: Yes, I think he did some work with him. I wonder what's ever happened to Funk. Is he still around?

Riess: I don't know.

Church: I was thinking about him the other day. I don't know why. But we used to see him a lot. Suddenly he disappeared.

Riess: Mario Corbett?

Church: Yes, he liked Mario and he did do some things with him. [Since died. E.R.C.]

Riess: Would there be architects whom he really wouldn't work with for one reason or another? One reason might be the architect himself. Another might be that the whole thing would be too incompatible.

Church: Maybe. I really wouldn't have known.

Riess: I'll go through my list. [John C.] Campbell and [Worley] Wong.

Church: He liked Worley Wong very much. I think maybe he did some things with him, but they always did quite a lot of commercial work. Tommy early stopped doing anything like that.

Riess: I'm thinking of their residential architecture though I know they've done a lot of non-residential. Callister?

Church: Warren Callister. Tommy knew him. Now, he may have done one or two things with him. His things were highly specialized and very intricate, and he was the kind of person, I think, that had one thing and just worked on it. He never had a real big flourishing office or anything like that, Callister. I think he kept a very low profile. [I really don't know about that. E.R.C.]

Riess: Well, then, in the fifties and sixties were there other architects that Tommy particularly worked with?

Church: He loved to work with Bill because, well, they were generally in accord with the project and with one another. But then, you see, when Bill came back from MIT, while he'd been gone his office had really changed quite a bit from the personal approach to clients as much as it had been before, which was Bill's and was the way his office started out to be.

And Tommy adored Gardner Dailey. He loved working with him. In the beginning, as was the story of that period, most architects started out with more traditional things and then they moved into the modern, and that's what Gardner did.

Bill, I feel, didn't do that so much. He did maybe just one or two things that were traditional, one or two examples in his very early days, and then he became modern. But then he moved back again a little bit into the more traditional.

Riess: How about [Robert] Anshen and [W.S.] Allen and the Eichler home work?

Church: Well, Tommy did do some Eichler-home things, yes.

Riess: Now, was that because of the connection with Bob Anshen?

Church: Maybe. I guess so. I really don't remember that. [Added by Mrs. Church in editing] Other architects Tommy worked with in the fifties and sixties were: Willard Rand (San Francisco), Quincy Jones (Los Angeles), Richard Kimball (Connecticut), Wallace Neff (Hollywood), Henry Eggers (Los Angeles), Goodwin Steinberg (San Jose), Cliff May (Los Angeles), Jack Warner (Santa Barbara).

62) Japanese Gardens

- Riess: Joseph Howland says, "I always thought California and America suffered a large loss in design thinking because Tommy and Harwell Hamilton Harris never really seemed to work together, despite a tremendous respect each had for the other."
- Church: Well, I don't believe they really did, and I don't see how they could.
- Riess: You don't believe they really worked together, or that they had this tremendous respect?
- Church: I don't think they ever did work together. I never heard of them doing so. Well, maybe they did have a great respect for each other. I imagine they did.
- Riess: Harris, he says, brought Japanese-type design to the west coast.
- Church: Yes, somewhat.
- Riess: Do you think that working in a Japanese garden style would have been something that Tommy would have resisted?
- Church: Yes, I think he would have resisted it. I think he never wanted to be held down to any particular kind of thing.
- Riess: Did Japanese gardens ever fascinate him?
- Church: You know, he's always been funny about Japan. Yesterday the doctor and his wife came to see Tommy. They're going to Japan to give a lot of lectures because in Japan they have certain areas where there are extraordinarily large numbers of people with this same [disease] as Tommy has. And they were asking Tommy, didn't he have lots of opportunities to go to Japan and make lectures and so forth, and Tommy nodded, and he [the doctor] said, "Oh, you should have gone." Tommy went like this [gestures, indicating disagreement].

But he never really wanted to do that. He didn't want to become too immersed. I think I heard him say one time that he almost feared the impact of maybe just being thrown off his base or something. Maybe he thought he was too old to take such a--now, I'm making it sound awfully serious. In a way, I always felt it was rather serious.

All through those fifties and sixties people would come through San Francisco from Japan and have a few hours and they'd call us up. And we've sat here with more wide-eyed people just off the plane saying, "Oh, Tommy, how can you be a landscape architect and not go to Japan?"

Church: And I just would also sit here thinking, "If you'd only stop saying that! We will never get to Japan! If one more person says that to Tommy, he'll never go near Japan." [Laughter]

I do think that's a very foolish assessment, don't you? I mean, you can't say to somebody, "How can you be so-and-so without ever having been to Japan?" What did they want?

In the first place, Tommy always said this about himself--now, when I've repeated this I've never had anybody that even faintly agreed, but I do see what he means. He said that he feels that the basic principles in his work, in his thinking, were very much like the Japanese because their architecture was a certain way, and it was applied to a certain kind of a landscape, and the garden had the same principles that he tried to apply to the--I'm not describing it properly. But maybe you see what I mean.

Riess: Well, I always think of a Japanese garden as being an "outdoor room."

Church: That's right.

Riess: Rather than a space that goes off indefinitely, it's very contained.

Church: And it's close to the house.

Riess: Yes.

Church: And, as you say, it's a kind of an extension of the house. Now, the things that most people think of as the Japanese gardens are the fantastic--

Riess: Raked stones?

Church: No. Well, those are very special. In fact, they have a sacred significance, those sands and stone and those things. But the beautiful plants and the horticultural part of the garden are what most people think of when they think of a Japanese garden. They don't, most people don't, look at the plans of a Japanese garden. They are now published in books about Japanese gardens, but I don't think most people look at those.

Riess: That's interesting.

Church: I don't think they look at that. I don't think the plans mean very much to them. I think what means a tremendous amount to them are the details, the fantastic bonsai and the hundred-year-old this and that and the specimens. They have specimens. And apparently to go to a Japanese nursery in Tokyo is just one of the great experiences you can have.

Church: I feel that that is sort of what people think of when they think of the Japanese garden. They don't think of the relation of it to the house and to the site, which, of course, is what the garden is. At least I think that's always been what Tommy felt.

Riess: I think of an area like that [Your Private World, p. 167], for instance, as suggesting--

Church: [Looking at picture] Yes. Now, I think that's very Japanese. But, you see, now people here wouldn't think that. They wouldn't feel--I've never heard anybody say to Tommy that, "...you were influenced in any way by [Japanese garden design]."

Riess: The way he used boulders and specimen plants--it's never occurred to people to say that?

Church: I don't think so.

June Campbell, who worked for many years in Tommy's office, was one of the early people that was attracted to the Orient, and as soon as she got a little bit of money together, she always went to the Orient. And she would come back absolutely in an hypnotic trance of Japanese gardens, and I think this used to annoy Tommy very much indeed. [Laughter]

Riess: Now, look at that. [Your Private World, p. 65] That looks like a Japanese garden.

Church: Isn't that totally?

You know, it's funny, I don't know that I've really analyzed it so much. My analysis comes about through talking [laughter]. So much of it is also running off at the edges, but I think you do analyze when you're talking, at least some people do.

I've never really thought about that as much. But I've often thought that that continual talking about "you ought to go to Japan" seems--oh, and Elizabeth Gordon, the House Beautiful editor, she went to Japan and just sank absolutely below the surface and she's never come up from that. She hounded Tommy continually, and finally she said to me, "I'm not going to speak about it any more. I see he just has a fixed idea."

Well, I honestly think, now as I'm just sitting here talking of this, that probably the reason he did get sort of a--oh, he didn't have a fixed idea. It just never worked out exactly, the moment [to go]. I mean, he did have lots of offers to go there and teach but in the first place, he didn't want to teach, and in the second place,

Church: he didn't want to spend so much time away from the office. And then we had this pull towards Europe, and our daughter was there, and the Academy, and Rome, and all kinds of things like that that really drew us more than starting off for the Orient.

Tommy did suggest a trip once--and I blame myself for not having accepted that, I argued against it. Air France was opening an inaugural flight from Tokyo to Paris, and he suggested to me we fly to Tokyo and have about ten days in Japan and then take the inaugural flight. And I said no, because I felt that it would be so overwhelming, and only to have 10 days, I wouldn't feel that it was--now this was 25 or 30 years ago and you see how thinking has changed, you wouldn't hesitate today.

Riess: I know.

Church: But I could see myself getting all tangled. Of course I was thinking about myself. Now Tommy can go to a place for a weekend and just get so much that he doesn't have to stay any longer. In fact, he often said that, that he thought you should stay either a very short time, or months, where you were really going to sink into the thing. Now, that ten days probably would have been a perfectly wonderful thing to have done. Anyway, we didn't do it. I'd like to go to Japan, but I will have to go probably without Tommy, but I'll be thinking all the time "what would he have thought?" and I'll never know. I'll never see it in the right way because all my thinking is so superficial.

But as you point out those things in that book, now nobody has ever, ever, in any pictures of Tommy's, suggested that there was anything that was in any way like a Japanese garden. But I see that instantly. It's striking. The use of wood. That's another thing, you see, and he began that early.

And of course we did have a lot of Oriental artifacts here in this area. You know, Tommy was, and is, a very understated and in many ways a very unassuming person, very. And I think he would just think it was so funny that nobody ever called that to anyone's attention, and he would be the last person who was going to bring it to their attention, you know?

People always sort of drew their mouths down at the corners and said, "Oh, perhaps Tommy only likes such-and-such French gardens." Of course, he never did anything that was even faintly like a French garden, really, except maybe little bits and pieces. But wouldn't it be funny if in years to come he became known as the first Western Japanese gardener! After all these people who have steeped themselves in the Japanese design.

Church: Gardner Dailey always said that that very famous Japanese garden in Saratoga was much better than any Japanese garden that you would go to in Japan. He took a dim view of Japanese [gardens]. He didn't care, Gardner didn't, I don't believe, and I do remember on two or three occasions his making somewhat light of Japan and its much-touted influence.

In the early days in Berkeley I remember that a lot of the big gardens--and lots of people's gardens were very large in those days--usually had a Japanese gardener, but he was ordered to keep his own gardening talents way down. Usually you went through a little wicket fence gate, and this poor soul in his off hours was able to tend his little stones and bonsai and so forth.

63) Spain: The Moorish Gardens

Church: Oh, I was going to tell you about Elizabeth Gordon (Elizabeth Norcross). They've just been in Spain. It's the first time that either of them have been there.

Riess: This is a married name?

Church: Norcross she is. She's now retired, and she travels all around on these retired persons' trips, and they're fantastically inexpensive. She went to Japan on that. That's probably what I should do. I should go on one of these. It's a plane-load of retired people, and you don't ever have to speak to them again after you get off the plane, and you don't have to speak to them on the plane if you don't want to.

But on the same retired people's thing they rented an apartment in southern Spain, in Seville, and they had a car. They spent a lot of time at the Alhambra, which she had never seen. When Tommy first swam into her orbit, she knew very little about the Alhambra. And that's the first thing I remember about Tommy talking about the Alhambra and the beautiful Moorish gardens there, because they are just fantastic, and they're so Oriental, really.

Riess: Did he see the Alhambra, then, in his first year abroad?

Church: 1926 or 1927. Somewhere in there. For the first time. And it went through him like a double-edged blade.

Riess: Well, on that subject, Howland says Tommy, "...always credited his initial interest in the Spanish influence on architecture as having the greatest effect on his own design interests." I was surprised at that.

Church: Tommy always said to me that when he came from California and first went to Harvard and then went to Europe, he had always understood that the great influence on California gardens and in California was the Italian. Beginning at the turn of the century, when so many of our lovely big gardens were created in California, particularly in the south, like Santa Barbara and those estates, they were completely Italianate. That was the direction the people were going back and forth [from the East Coast]. Then instead of going to Italy, they came to California. They had lived in Italy, and they were deeply immersed in it. And that's what they recreated here.

But Tommy felt when he came to Spain that that was California. Italy of course was much more organized for tourism, to open up all these things that people, visitors, would see and be influenced by. Spain was not, and I think in those days--oh, Tommy's descriptions of some of the trips in Spain that they made, all those boys together, off in the wilds somewhere, and their train wouldn't go--the conditions were very primitive. There weren't nearly so many people visiting Spain in those days. People were not so immersed in Spain as they were in Italy.

Tommy has done a couple of pools, I can't think where they are, but they're long narrow pools, and the Alhambra has that, it has a long narrow pool.

The French have, really in their simple gardens, what they call a piece d'eau, a piece of water, and it has hardly any border. It has maybe a very narrow cut stone border. But usually the grass comes right up to that, and really what it is is to have water to scoop up and use in the garden. And you find it really in quite small gardens. Tommy did one of those up in one of the Seattle places. I've forgotten which one now. It could be a swimming pool; it's a long narrow pool, and the proportion is lovely.

Isn't it wonderful the way we've gotten away from those hideous pools of our childhood? They were the ugliest things that anybody could possibly have.

Riess: Yes, they were certainly not for looking at.

65) Gardens Are For People: Revising, Binding, Loaning

Church: Now Tommy's working very hard every day with Grace on the revision of Gardens Are for People. He always wanted to do that, and to annotate all of his swimming pool work, and so that is being incorporated into a new edition.

Riess: Is Your Private World based on the articles in the Chronicle?

Church: Yes. They appeared in the Sunday Chronicle over a period of a couple of years, I think. Many people, with typical frankness, said that they didn't think it was nearly as good as the first one. Well, I said, "It isn't." I mean, you really can't compare them. It's not the same sort of thing.

The first thing was just the essence of Tommy and his thinking and had a lot of wonderful naive things too about it, I think. And the second one was just these little vignettes that he did. They appeared, as I say, over quite a long period in the Sunday Chronicle, and most of them were based on experience. The first book is really a man's philosophy, I think, isn't it?

Riess: Yes. I think the first book is the most generous kind of outpouring of everything that Tommy knew and thought at that time.

Church: Well, yes, I think that's a very good description of it.

It was about the first of the period of that kind of a book, really. It's hard to believe that's true, but I think I'm justified in saying that. One reason I feel it very strongly is that had it been done a few years later, it would have been done in a handsome manner. It's a very cheap binding and it's poor paper and the reproductions are poor. All the color plates were given to them by House Beautiful, and Tommy did all the layout, which he wanted to do.

I want to show you the volume that I had bound by Mrs. Florence Walter (Nell Sinton's mother). [Hands book to interviewer.] This was the only successful present I've ever given to Tommy! [Laughing]

Riess: How beautiful!

Church: She took the book out of the other miserable, cheap binding, and she did this.

I called her up one day and I said, "Would you do this?" And she said, "Well, I'm just sitting here in bed looking at Tommy's book this very minute, and I can't think of anything I'd like to do more." So, she did.

Riess: Oh, let me read this into the machine, because I was trying to think of how I could describe it, and here is the description: It says, "Bound in yellow tan levant morocco. Multi-colored floral mosaics designed from triangles with gold-tooled designs in straight lines on both covers. Title gold-tooled vertically on spine. Doublures and flyleaves of yellow calf. Illustrated paper guards." It is just beautiful.

Church: Isn't it really fabulous?

Riess: Yes. Weren't you clever to think of doing it!

Church: Goodness! Well, I'm glad I did. I'm so thoughtless that I haven't really thought of anything proper. But I'm awfully glad.

Riess: And this has been in bookbinding exhibitions, I gather.

Church: Yes.

Riess: It really is choice.

Church: David Magee estimated its worth at about \$1,000.

Riess: And did she make the paper used on the box?

Church: It's handmade paper, but she didn't make it. I think it came from France.

It was the only time that I have ever given Tommy anything that was such a total success--his face fell. He was really quite overwhelmed. Because he is a very hard person to give a present to. The children always used to say, 'Well, if Papa wants something, he just goes and buys it, so there's nothing left for us to give.'

Riess: And to think of the copy that I carry around from the U.C. Library that is just totally dog-eared.

Church: Well, you know, we latch onto those copies wherever we can because they are few and far between. Every now and then somebody dies and they haven't allocated their copy to some descendant, so we get it.

Riess: Every time I go to an old bookstore I should start looking for them.

Church: Oh, you should, you should. And, in fact, if you get more than you want, why then you could always tell me. I would take any overflow. [Laughter]

Riess: Now, what do you intend doing with them?

Church: Well, I have so many people that have "loaned" their copies, and they never get them back, and I'm always wanting to give people some extra ones. In fact, the most famous borrower is Mr. Agnelli, the head of the Fiat. The person that loaned his copy is a friend of ours, the architect of Fiat, in Turin, and he loaned it to Mr. Agnelli, and he can't ask him for it back. So, he's never gotten it back.

Church: The wife at one point wanted to employ Tommy to make her a swimming pool. She was going to have a modern swimming pool. Tommy went to see the place where she proposed to put it, and he just almost died because it was the most beautiful setting, and in that she wanted to have a modern House Beautiful swimming pool. Tommy said he couldn't do it.

Riess: Did he influence her otherwise?

Church: No, not at all. [Laughter] She's uninfluenceable.

Riess: Who is Alice Irving?

Church: She was a client in Santa Barbara. Now, that was a very Japanesque garden, come to think of it--all those stones and moss. The house was done by Lulah Riggs, who is a very interesting architect in Southern California. I believe she's still busy in Santa Barbara.

Just when the war was over and people began again to spend money on building, or could build, she had an office of these young, dynamic, modern architects, and they all conspired on things like that Alice Irving house. And then the other quite big elaborate house that they did was the [Pardee] Erdman house in Montecito, and Tommy did the gardens for both of those.

65) Eero Saarinen and the General Motors Technical Center

Riess: There was certainly a lot of work in the fifties and sixties that we haven't even gotten to. [Eero] Saarinen, the General Motors Technical Center--what do you recall of Tommy's participation in that as landscape architect? Did he spend a lot of time in Michigan on the site. How did that all work?

Church: Well, he went there a good many times.

Riess: And was he working closely with Saarinen?

Church: Very. Yes. They became intimate friends, and afterwards he did other work with Saarinen. He adored Saarinen. Oh, that was a terrible blow when Saarinen died. Tommy felt that. We used to meet him in Europe. And then when we went to Finland--I guess that was through Bill Wurster, who had known the father.

Riess: Eliel.

Church: I think Tommy did know the father too, but he hadn't known him as long as Bill had. I don't believe he knew him at that time. But he gave us all sorts of letters of introduction when we went to Finland.

Riess: And did you travel with Saarinen?

Church: We traveled with him sometimes in Europe. We didn't know him at the time that we went to Finland. He was quite a bit younger, I think, than Tommy. I'm sure he was. And he was married to a very charming girl whom we knew in the early days. Then he married the lady architect. What was her name? I think she was with the New York Times or something.

Riess: Aline.

Church: Aline, yes.

Riess: Well, do you think that the contact with Saarinen influenced Tommy's architectural thinking?

Church: I feel it must have. I don't know how many small things they did together. I believe they did do some work together in this place, Bloomfield Hills where his office was.

Riess: At the General Motors Technical Center, Tommy wasn't being asked to do anything that was remotely like anything he'd ever done before, it seems to me.

Church: No.

Riess: I mean, it's hardly intimate in any way. It's alleés of trees and water.

Church: Yes. I was looking at pictures of that, though, not too long ago, and it sort of suggested something Finnish. Those trees. Aalto used so many of those alleés of trees that almost looked as if they were the forest, and sometimes the building would appear to have been cut into an opening in the forest, in a way.

66) University of California Campus Master Planning

Riess: In the sixties came the University campus planning.

Church: Yes. He loved that.

Riess: Did he seek that out? And what did that fulfill for him, do you think?

Church: Well, I think maybe it was sort of nostalgia. He always had a love for that campus, and I think he may have felt that he assisted in bridging certain gaps that might have widened with all the renewed building and various changes.

Then apparently he had always wanted to change certain roads that he'd always said were wrong in the campus.

Riess: You mean even before he had been given this job?

Church: Oh, before he even became a landscape architect.

Now, perhaps I'm wrong about this. It seems to me there was a road--I have never been back to see it. But the library, which Tommy always considered a very beautiful building--wasn't that John Galen Howard?

Riess: Yes.

Church: But wasn't the road too low or something of the sort?

Riess: The road just went by it.

Church: That's right. But now doesn't it change in some way so that you get a view of it?

Riess: Yes, it really sweeps up to it.

Church: Well, now, you see, that's one of Tommy's fortes. Now, those are the things that people don't realize because they are so right when they're done that you never can imagine that they've been done any other way. But I have the kind of mind that when they're done the wrong way, I can never imagine them being done the other way! To me it is still the most extraordinary surprise to think that you really could manipulate--

Riess: Well, that's interesting. Even before he was a landscape architect he saw things that way.

Church: Oh, yes. He fought like mad for the Faculty Glade, because there was a moment when that was going to be obscured, and he begged that that be preserved.

And then, you know, he worked very hard on the campus at Santa Cruz. The early plan was to put all the buildings down by the entrance where the meadows and the cattle grazing form a bucolic scene. He said, "Don't start the building here." Now, you see, had they done that, the colleges might never have been developed dramatically in the redwoods as were the early buildings.

Tommy begged them to put the college buildings in the redwoods, and leave this wonderful effect with the cows grazing which is so beautiful today. Of course, who knows what the future of that poor college is going to be. It's very sad at the moment. Reagan reduced the funds so that they really didn't have enough money to do anything.

I looked out of our house one time in Santa Cruz and saw Tommy digging up a whole bed of some very precious thing that I had there and I said, "What in heaven's name are you doing with it?" And he said, "I'm taking it down to the University because they can't afford to put plants around the new building."

67) Comments on Friendships, Clients, Decks, and Influence

Riess: Tommy kept his office small in the fifties and sixties, yet he apparently wanted also to work on a larger scale.

Church: Well, I think those consultations on a daily or even hourly basis were all through the architects, and he relished very much his connection with some of the great architects. That was a very happy and satisfying thing.

Riess: Being around architects.

Church: Yes. After all, he really presumably had more in common with the architect, naturally. That was a more natural relationship than with the gardeners.

Riess: Oh, yes.

Church: Although he loved certain gardeners.

Riess: Well, but more of a relationship with the architects than with the landscape architects?

Church: I really think so, yes, I do. Well, he was very close to Vaughan, very close. They remained always completely devoted.

Riess: Then the ones who came out of his office, he was very fond of all of them and saw them. Tommy really didn't have much time for any kind of fraternizing or social life. You know, he never did that sort of lunch business. When the Villa Taverna opened across from the office, he did have a place to have lunch that was almost like belonging to a club.

Years ago his name came up on the list of the P.U. [Pacific Union] Club, which was a great surprise because we'd always been told that several people had to die, and you practically had to die, to be able to be invited to join it. So, he was approached and they gave him a certain amount of time to think it over. During that time, we had dinner one night with an old friend, and this man was really being sort of funny. (Tommy was so grateful to him.)

This man said, "Tommy, are you really going to use this Pacific Union Club?" And Tommy said, "Well, honestly, no, because I never take time to have lunch in town and I'm out of town most of the time."

Then this man said, "And you aren't going to invite us to lunch and pay for our lunch?" Tommy said, "Certainly not!"

And then this man said, "Well, we don't want you." [Laughter] Tommy said, "Thank you so much for making up my mind for me!"

People always thought of Tommy as being such a self-contained person and somebody that never had any inner doubts. I don't know whether he did or not. But I do think that it must be wonderful for a young person starting out as he did, and relatively unknown, to have such tremendous areas of enthusiasm when the going must have been rough lots of the time.

Riess: Areas of enthusiasm on the part of people for his work.

Church: Yes. And I think, as we were saying about his favorite clients, it seems sort of a superficial thing to say, but I'm sure it's true, that the enthusiasm of some of these people was a tremendous [nurturant]--well, you'd just see somebody flower under it, you know.

Riess: Yes.

Church: Now, those two girls in the Northwest, those two particular girls that I speak of so much, the Wagner and the Bloedel girls, they were a marvelous influence in Tommy's work. Although neither of

Church: them--and they'd be the first to admit it--could possibly have seen the things that he saw when he first saw their places. I mean, there were a lot of things there that just had to be changed. I wouldn't have seen them either. In the Bloedel garden, for example, the road comes in beside the pond so that the house is first glimpsed over water. Have you seen a picture of that?

I'm going to make a note of that, and send it to you. Mrs. Bloedel has a picture of it that she sends for Christmas cards. I used to take it with me when I went to Europe, and I'd show it to people, and they'd say, "It is not possible that this is in America."

And I'd say, "It isn't only that it's in America; it's in the Northwest!" which was just considered the--

But Mr. Merrill, the father of these two girls, had the intelligence, really, in the early part of the century, to get Charles Platt from New York to come out and design a house. It houses the family foundation. Nobody lives in it now. But it's where the girls grew up.

Riess: So you say that they're a great influence. It sounds like saying the Medicis were a great influence on Michaelangelo.

Church: I think so. I really do. They're both people of perfect taste. They're girls that never went to college, they didn't need to go to college, and really, in a way, they're uneducated. But they have absolutely perfect taste, those two women.

Riess: That's fascinating.

Church: Yes. I think you're just born that way.

Another family that he has worked for for years and has always been very inspiring is the [Kenneth] Van Strums in Hillsborough. He's done many jobs for them.

Riess: As the fifties began, Tommy was just about fifty too and sure of his ability, and I wondered what he really wanted to do at that point with the years of creative work ahead of him. It seems significant then that he did choose to do some of the large-scale things like the University.

Church: Yes. He worked ten years on the University of California, I think. And in that time he took on the University at Santa Cruz.

Riess: Because landscape architects were moving into more large-scale planning?

Church: Yes, I'm sure that entered largely into it. But I do think Tommy's career fitted harmoniously into the times or maybe that was his adaptability to them. It probably was, but then the times made use of his natural talents, didn't they?

Riess: Once you mentioned that Tommy had done some work free. What would be the kind of job he would deem worthy?

Church: What he "deemed worthy" perhaps was a combination of the client and the completion of the plan--they must be "worthy" of each other--though I'm afraid this is not too clear. Over the years there were many examples of this which I never knew of from Tommy but have learned of later from the client. Just the other day an old client sent a very large check with a note saying he had never paid Tommy what he owed him.

And today [added in editing] I met Mr. and Mrs. Milton Esberg, Jr. who said that years ago they asked Tommy if he would come out to see the new property they had just bought, to advise them what to do with the landscaping. Tommy went there and looked over the property. The clients said, "What should we do?" Tommy said, "Nothing. It's exactly right as it is. I couldn't improve it." He never sent a bill.

Riess: You know, so much of Tommy's importance for certain people is the fact that he was the great teacher.

Church: Yes, though he didn't like formal teaching.

Riess: Well, I don't mean that.

Church: I know what you mean. His influence on other people. And it was quite an amazing thing to watch. I think I have described to you how often I would meet somebody that he'd just employed, and I wouldn't see how--they seemed so unformed and so young. And then if they were subjected in the proper manner, not subdued but subjected to his influence, they emerged. He drew from people. I think he really is a great teacher because he draws from you, without your being aware of it, really, all your best qualities.

Once I went to a Pablo Casals master class at the University, and that was just one afternoon, but I realized then what the great teacher does, because here were these unformed creatures with horrible squeaky sounds emerging from ghastly instruments, and then all of a sudden, with two or three sort of phrases from Casals, and showing the wrist and a few little things like that, they drew a proper string, and then the next time they did two, and so on. And I did think about Tommy, I felt that was very much like Tommy.

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Maggie Baylis

DOUG BAYLIS, THE CHURCH OFFICE, AND GARDEN PUBLICATIONS

Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

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Maggie Baylis
June 27, 1977

Interviewed in her home and studio on Gerke Alley, Telegraph Hill

1) Tommy Church's Influence on Doug Baylis

Baylis: Doug was born in the East, in New Jersey. Came out here to Long Beach when his father died, when he was about 16 years. Went to high school and he was there during the earthquake in Long Beach in '33. Then finally he decided that he would like to get into landscaping, because he had worked with a man in Long Beach who was a landscape architect, a man named George Carpenter.

He came up to Berkeley after having had a couple of years at a junior college down there and working with Carpenter in construction, maintenance, and learning about the whole process of landscape architecture. This man, Carpenter, was the old-fashioned kind of landscape architect. That is, it was a time before even the title was much used. He was more likely a landscape designer.

So Doug developed an interest in it and he went to Berkeley, finished in '41, had three years there, and he came off with, "modestly she said," came off with the highest grade record for anyone who had worked in the landscape school. And this was his thing. He loved it. The rest of the things which were a part of college didn't mean much to him, but that really was something.

Riess: How did he account for his great love of it? Had he always loved flowers and things like that, or what aspect?

Baylis: No, something that just was a part of his nature. He liked the outdoors. He worked outdoors. He worked with his hands well so that he had this feeling of the plants. He was fascinated, probably more than any other factor. Never considered any other profession; as far as he was concerned, that was it.

So he wrote Tommy a letter. He obviously had a chance to go to Harvard, but he decided against it, he actually turned down Harvard. Tommy got the letter and he said it was the stuffiest letter

Baylis: he had ever read. He said he almost didn't hire him. But he finally allowed him to come over and be interviewed because Doug was so serious. Doug had a marvelous sense of humor which through the years became even more delightful. But at that time he took himself very seriously.

Well, he was with Tommy from '41 until about 1943. Then Tommy literally kicked him out. He said, "Now look. I can't do anything more for you." He needed to develop socializing. He really hadn't come to that. So it was an interesting kind of thing that he went to work for the Housing Authority in San Francisco.

Riess: Now I'm going to stop you a bit because it's all going so very fast and I've got lots of questions. At what point do you enter the scene?

Baylis: I did not meet him until '46.

Riess: Oh, okay. Because I wondered why he would have written to Tommy and what Tommy stood for.

Baylis: Well, one thing which entered into it was that Punk Vaughan, Leland Vaughan, was teaching at Berkeley. Punk and Tommy were very good friends.

I think there was a legend that was built up about Tommy because he in his own way was more concerned with the whole process of how people live and what he could do to make living better. This appealed to Doug who felt that classic landscape architecture was stuffy, that it was all regimented and it was like classic architecture, that it related to "what did it look like?" rather than "what did it give one?" I think this was the thing that appealed to Doug when he discovered slowly through Punk and through hearing stories about Tommy, that this was the man whom he really would like to know. He decided that that was the one place he was going to work. Even when he was still in school, he had made up his mind that inevitably he would go to Tommy Church.

Riess: But his interest was still mostly in residential.

Baylis: It was residential at that time because Tommy was not doing anything that was commercial. He had done the place down--is it Pasatiempo?--the place down in the country. But that wasn't commercial. It was primarily residential because again it was the intimate aspect of it.

Again, to repeat, I think this is where Doug saw that he was going, but he wasn't sure enough of himself because he wasn't sure of himself socially or how he would get along with people, how he would handle himself with people. He had to learn that.

Riess: That's interesting. And he wasn't gathered in by the Telesis kind of activity?

Baylis: No, not at all. He was aware of all these things, but he was never a joiner. Doug simply refused to join organizations. It was quite awhile before he finally joined the landscape architects. I think he was negatively influenced because Tommy had been turned down by the ASLA because he had his own contractor (not an accepted custom by ASLA) which you've probably heard along the line. Doug felt this was unfair. And he just wouldn't join. Finally, he decided that he ought to join because he might have some influence, and he worked toward that direction. Then there's more of that story later.

Riess: So he was hired, though Tommy, you said, thought the letter was so stuffy. But then the interview was--

Baylis: It was all right. I think Tommy liked him but recognized that here was a young man who had some problems. So Doug drafted for him. He hated to draft. And he did a good job. But he just hated drafting. I always teased him because I was sure he married me because I knew how to draft. [Laughs]

Riess: There were a couple of women in there? Didn't they draft for him?

Baylis: Yes, June Meehan was there at that time. And Marie Harbeck, both good draftsmen. As I remember now, Marie was a plant expert.

Then when Doug left and went to the Housing Authority, he was involved in looking for sites for war housing. That was personal development because he got out in the field and he met lots of people. It was quite something. It wasn't until late '45 after the war had ended that he made up his mind to open his own office. He opened it just a block from Tommy, and with Tommy's blessing. Tommy fed him work. In fact, all of the people who worked with Tommy were always very lucky because the jobs would come along and Tommy could well have handled them, but instead he would pass them along. Larry got his start, his help that way. Bob Royston, all these boys.

Riess: Well, Tommy couldn't handle them indefinitely.

Baylis: No, that's right. And the thing was that Tommy always kept his office size under control. He wanted to personally be a part of it. Doug followed in that direction. We tried a larger office and came back. He said, "I don't want it. I want to personally be involved in these things. Otherwise there's no point in doing it." Which was a choice that I think we both agreed was the right one.

Riess: You think that's something that he learned from Tommy or do you think he had felt that always?

Baylis: I'm quite sure that it's something that he learned working in Tommy's office, that the real joy of this profession was to be involved. If you got to the point that you were of size and you had 40 people, you were an administrator. You no longer did the things that you enjoyed doing. This was very definitely influenced by Tommy.

Riess: You said that he did drafting for Tommy and that was not his favorite thing. What else?

Baylis: And he photographed some of Tommy's gardens and details, too. But Tommy was primarily the photographer of his own things. In fact, when Doug got his own office he bought himself a camera. He was very excited, bought a 5 x 7. And he went out and photographed one of Tommy's gardens out on oh, the north end of the city. The garden was completely bloomed with tulips.

Doug went out and shot the whole thing, the first time he had done it. And he had the film processed and they made a mistake and processed it in black and white. It was such a monumental disappointment that he never used the camera again and finally gave it away. He just couldn't believe it because it was something that he had looked forward to for such a long time. This is a little clue to his personality, that he wasn't impatient, but he demanded the best.

Again, this was in a good sense too what Tommy offered; he recognized in Tommy a person of integrity, a person whose follow-through was effective, and who did something that no one else could do. Doug was very much influenced by this man.

Riess: Do you think Punk Vaughan's teaching was just so very much in line with Tommy Church's practice?

Baylis: I don't think it was. A lot of Punk's teaching was still related to the earlier time because it was a matter of the older method of teaching people how to use tools, that you had to go through all the rudiments in order to do anything, you had to know how to use all this information. So it was deeply ingrained in the students then. They had to learn all the plants. They had to learn how to use them, where they would grow. But more than that, that the plates that they did, and the things that they did, were of a more traditional nature.

I know that Doug was influenced by the fact that Tommy would take the back of an envelope, literally, and make a little sketch. Because Doug was that kind of person. He wielded a very soft pencil. He was criticized several times in early, early moments by architects who would be annoyed by this great big, black pencil. But this was the way he thought. It was again a thing that Tommy did, that Tommy

Baylis: worked loosely in making his designs. There were great sheafs of that yellow manila, that sheer paper, which were filled with ideas and sketches. This was not the typical way for earlier landscape architects to work; they worked tight.

Riess: If you have a man like Tommy who works loosely, his dearest hope might be that he'll get somebody as an associate who will come in and round him out. But he had a lot of creative people coming in, and careful drafting was probably the last thing they were likely to want to do. Do you think that also applies to Royston and Halprin?

Baylis: I think so, yes. But I think they were more disciplined in many ways than Doug was. Doug was somewhat undisciplined. When he finally swung over and opened up, his discipline was quite a different one. It was a personal kind of thing where if he made a commitment, he would complete a commitment. That was that part. But he was relaxed about what he did because he really liked it.

I would say that toward the end of his life, he changed. He was looking for new directions. He had felt that there were other things that he ought to be into in relation to how people live and what people do. We got into a great deal of publicity. We did a lot of magazine and national publication work also. Oh, not as much as Tommy did with House Beautiful, but certainly he contributed to all the national magazines and developing ideas, where Tommy would present actual accomplishments, and particularly in House Beautiful, things that he did there.

Riess: Developing ideas then that people read?

Baylis: Could read and be influenced by, like the kind of thing which suggests, "I can do this." It's a motivation kind of thing that he was involved in. I think his whole later life was dedicated to motivating people to do something. It didn't matter if it didn't turn out well, but the important thing was, "don't just sit there, do something." Tommy had that in the way that he handled people. He got people to accomplish things, where Doug did not. There were lots of times he didn't reach that, he didn't seem to have that thing that Tommy had.

Riess: Do you mean getting the clients involved?

Baylis: Getting the client involved, or getting the client to build, and getting the completed kind of thing. Tommy, through the years, because of his personality, because of his abilities, attracted a great many people who had the wherewithal to go right ahead and do something. Not that they wouldn't complain about money, but that

Baylis: they did it. Where very often Doug would get involved with people who had less amounts. Then there was always that cutting back or holding back kind of thing.

Riess: Doug didn't have exposure to the east then?

Baylis: He did in later years. He didn't do anything in foreign countries but he did jobs in various parts of the country.

Riess: The reason I bring that up is it occurs to me that Tommy had his association over all the years with the American Academy and apparently really firmly believed in that chance for people to get almost the classical background. I wondered whether he presented Doug with that option and suggested he get more background.

Baylis: Never that I knew about. Doug never talked about it if he did. I know that Tommy and Doug had an excellent friendship kind of relationship where Doug would see him often and then not see him for a long time. But they did have a kind of mutuality. When Doug died, Tommy wrote a note saying that of all the men who had worked for him he felt closest to Doug. Oh, it was a beautiful, beautiful card.

Riess: When did he die?

Baylis: He died in November of '71 so that was quite a time ago. But it's a rather remarkable thing to contemplate because at no time did either Doug or Tommy express words like that. They didn't need to do that. They had very good feelings about one another but neither one of them felt it necessary to make a statement about it.

Riess: Well, that's nice that he had a chance to make it then.

Baylis: Yes, I thought so. I felt very pleased.

Riess: So when Doug went to the Church office apparently there was no contract for the future, or plans?

Baylis: Nothing, no. The other thing was that you see he finished in June of '41, and war was declared December 7th of '41, so he had only been with Tommy a short period when the war started. Then, of course, was this whole bit about, "would he be drafted?" Doug was an asthmatic and so all during the war period he was on the line: would he or wouldn't he be called? He lived temporarily. During the period it was always thought, "well, eventually, like with Royston, Doug would go."

Baylis: So when nothing happened by 1943, Doug indicated Tommy felt, "There's nothing more I can give you" because he recognized that Doug had certain abilities but that he needed something else. He needed to be pushed out of the nest and really face a lot of things he hadn't faced.

Riess: Tommy was working on Parkmerced then?

Baylis: Yes, and Doug worked on Parkmerced, and on Valencia Gardens.

Doug was influenced very much by Tommy and what Tommy produced and how he produced it and how he felt about spaces.

Riess: Can you illustrate some of that?

Baylis: Not really. I can't tell you except that I think many of the early residential jobs--Doug carried as many as 40 at a time--that the design would be simple and not formal. He did some formal, but really not many. He thought in, and seemed to produce design in relationship to what he had picked up from Tommy's influence.

Riess: And the use of form, then, would be the first interest.

Baylis: Yes, that's right because although function dictated the form, yet form gave it validity. Doug was also interested in the way Tommy used materials, the variety of materials that he used, how he handled privacy, how he managed to get trees planted--because that was something that Doug worked very hard on always on jobs, to get the trees in.

Riess: You mean he did something more than just dig a hole? [Laughs]

Baylis: Yes, Doug actually appeared on the scene when things were going on because he felt the urgency to.

Riess: No, but I mean how did Tommy manage to get trees planted that were different than other people?

Baylis: Well, I think that very often again with smaller budgets people would withhold planting trees because of cost, that they would put in something for immediate effect, but the trees take awhile before they get to the point where they're important. People say, "Well, I'll do that later." Of course, every time they did that they lost time in the growth of the trees.

Riess: Gosh, that must be a blow to the landscape architect to hear your client saying, "Let's take care of that later."

Baylis: Well, Doug went back to a job not too long before he died, that he had done 20 years before. He resented what he saw. He said, "This proves I should never go back to these old jobs." The people had not put trees in. He said it was the saddest place, just had absolutely no personality at all.

Riess: Yes, because the trees make the space.

Baylis: Yes, that's right.

Riess: Let's see, what was the atmosphere of the office during this couple of years?

Baylis: I think the couple of years he was there it was interesting that Doug never thought of himself as anything except just a beginner, where Royston was a very important person.

Royston was there at that time, and Royston felt and acted as though he knew where he was going. According to Doug, Royston was to come back and work with Tommy after the war, and Tommy would consider making him a partner or an associate.

Riess: That's interesting that that was clear to Doug, and it sounds like it was clear to Royston, too, but I don't know.

Baylis: Yes, but that Royston made the decision to set out on his own and turn his back on Tommy.

Riess: But he went with Eckbo?

Baylis: He went with Eckbo, that's right, I think.

Riess: Which is not exactly going on his own.

Baylis: No, but this was the thing that really caused a lot of comment. Then Larry appeared on the scene, Larry being a brilliant young man with a great many talents. Somehow or another he seemed to be the coming person, which he proved in many ways later, but a completely different personality. I don't know, I never heard anything, any gossip at any time, which would lead me to question that there would have been problems there. But Larry finally decided then to go on his own. He moved into an office on Commercial Street. (Doug had his own office on Washington Street.)

Riess: He [Larry] decided to go on his own, but he didn't say that Tommy asked him to?

Baylis: No, and I never did hear anything to that effect. So I don't know whether it was that kind of a break or not. I rather think that Tommy did the same as he did with the others, that Larry just on his own decided to go and then Tommy fed him some jobs. Because I remember conversation that there were some jobs that Tommy had passed along.

But Larry had extra space. He only had a couple of people at that time, and there was a young man sharing Doug's office by the name of Gordon Drake. Gordon was an architect whom we had met and known and loved, a young man who had gone through all of the Marine assaults in the Pacific, came back, and then in untimely manner was killed in a skiing accident in 1952. Gordon did the re-design of this house; this is the only re-model that he did, and he died just as we were starting it.

Anyhow, when Doug realized that he was going to have to leave that office on Washington Street, that was the reason that we decided to buy this old house and we put the office downstairs. Then Gordon moved in with Larry and was with him for about two months before the accident.

I think Larry finally at that point was beginning to feel more strength and he began to develop and go his direction. I know that there was great respect on both sides, but they were quite different people, Larry and Tommy. Larry was a powerful man and he had a powerful ego, he has a powerful ego. I think he's mellowed a great deal. I admire many things he's done, and I've worked with him on projects. But at one point he came to Doug and said that perhaps they should join. That was when Doug was in this office. Doug decided no, he did not want to do it. Again, Doug's personality perhaps again was the softer like Tommy's and he just knew it wouldn't work.

Riess: Yes, well actually it sounds like it worked out remarkably well considering what a small town San Francisco is.

Baylis: Yes, it has, it's been rather quite remarkable. When Doug finally got into the landscape architects, as I said, into the ASLA, then he began to work with them as a group and with Ted Osmundson and some of the others. They got the licensing for the profession.

Then in the late fifties Doug got involved with one of the conferences that was held at Big Sur. Now I am skipping some, but it's an interesting kind of thing because one of the things that he was interested in was breaking away from what he called the "fuddy-duddies." He felt it was very essential, that the Bay Area

Baylis: landscape architects had developed a style that was unique, and the East was slowly but surely becoming aware of it, but in many instances had not accepted it nor would they accept these mavericks on the coast. Doug felt that this was the direction that the profession should go and it was very important to reaffirm, to develop self-awareness.

He put together a program for this particular meeting with some of the people from Esalen. It was a wild thing to try because Esalen had only been active for about three years and they weren't sure where they were going. Mike Murphy was into this thing and he knew he had something, but there was so much yet that had to be expounded and developed. So of that meeting about a third of the members came away really feeling good about it. The rest of them were not very happy.

Riess: Well, or just confused.

Baylis: And just confused. But it was at that period then that Doug got more interested and he went to several of the San Francisco Esalen sessions. He didn't ever go to Big Sur, to any of their meetings. But I think it had a great deal to do with helping him also with his own self in relating to others during his 40s and 50s.

Riess: Well, that's just absolutely fascinating.

Baylis: He really opened up and he developed affection and was able to show it for lots of people where for many years he was not a social person. Doug didn't drink; he'd take one drink, but he just didn't enjoy that kind of thing. He didn't like small talk. I think that it was rather a remarkable time watching him blossom because I am naturally gregarious; I like people and I like going out. So it was an unfolding of the complete individual.

In watching him and Tommy then, in these later years when I saw them together, I saw the great affection that they felt because the warmth was showing.

One other strong person was in there in Doug's life, and I'll just say it now, and that's Walter Doty. We can come back to that.

Riess: Oh, yes. Well, I think he must have gotten into the Esalen thing just exactly at the right time because it sounds like what he would avoid.

Baylis: I thought it was remarkable.

Riess: Now, you said he wasn't small talk and all of that. I wonder, do you think Tommy is a small talk person?

- Baylis: No, I don't think he is. I think Tommy was always a person who somehow or other would not necessarily talk if he didn't have something to say. Tommy had none of those habits that businessmen have when they're together about discussing certain situations. I always felt that Tommy was quiet socially and yet he was very, very much revered.
- Riess: It's interesting that he always made everybody feel so comfortable, apparently.
- Baylis: Yes, it was a marvelous, marvelous sense, feeling comfortable and feeling in his presence that he cared about you at that moment and he was pleased to see you. He showed it in his face. Yet there was never a lot of conversation, didn't have to be. It was good. There were marvelous Christmas parties. I'm sure you've run into those, too.
- Riess: June mentioned the Christmas parties when I was asking about the atmosphere of the office, whether it was a pressured place.
- Baylis: I never had a sense of pressure when I walked into that office. I knew there was a great deal of work that was produced, but never had a sense that things were chaotic. The thing about it was that June, who ran things beautifully for the office, handled people in a way that was quite remarkable, because she was able to take telephone conversations--and people always want to talk to the principal--and she could manage this thing so that if they didn't get to talk to Tommy, they weren't offended and weren't upset by it. She had a knack. Of course, she and Doug didn't have much to say to one another all through the years. And yet they respected one another. But I think that again this was part of Doug's intolerance of people, for curious reasons, certain people. He was a quiet person himself and, like Tommy, didn't talk unless there was something to be said.
- Riess: Oh, yes. It always sounds like the right way to be, but I realize how unlike that I am.
- Baylis: Well, I, too, because I'm a space-filler.

Anyhow, the Christmas parties were a most successful thing. Belinda [Church] always would sing which made it special. She would come home from Europe and would be a part of it. There were the people from Wurster's office and Milono's office, all of the people would want to come back. The parties were given over and over again each year. You knew people came because they wanted to come to Tommy's, that was special.

- Riess: That's interesting. I hadn't known that they came from the other offices, and that was after Wurster had moved to Montgomery Street.

Baylis: Yes, after Wurster had moved, yes, even until the very end. In fact I think the last time I saw him, they had difficulty carrying him up the stairs. He was so determined to come.

Riess: Well, I heard some of the nostalgia for it when I was talking to Roger Sturtevant. I kept asking him questions like, "Why did you do this" and "Why that" and he said, "Oh, because we loved everything we were doing." He had just had this sense, unselfconscious, that things just happened.

Baylis: Well, lots of things did just happen. Roger was an offbeat character, one-of-a-kind. Ron Partridge was another. Ron was also one of that group who would just drop in to Tommy's office and would then get involved in something that Tommy had been involved in. I think he photographed several things of Tommy's. But there were lots of characters that were around. There were interesting people, all of them, each in his own way or her own way, delightful kinds of people that Tommy seemed to acquire in his life.

Riess: Yes, well that team of Church and Wurster, and I guess it's right to think of it as a team--

Baylis: It was, without being official. The one thing I remember Doug talking about was that Wurster and Tommy discussed the possibility of buying 402 Jackson. They had a chance to buy it for ten thousand dollars and Wurster said, "No." When you think about what that property is worth today! But the same thing is true of Tommy's house where he lives on Hyde. He rented it for years and years and years and never bought it until it reached a point where it was ridiculous.

Riess: Do you think that architects particularly have trouble with possessions?

Baylis: There is something about that. I don't know why Wurster felt it was not a good thing to do. Because certainly Doug never could explain it. I asked, too. He said, "No, I don't know why they didn't do it." It's just as simple as that.

Riess: Maybe it was wise. Maybe he felt that they had been thrown together so much that this was a form that their throwing together shouldn't take.

Baylis: Yes. Well, then Wurster's office was beginning to get bigger and bigger projects to do. He needed engineers. He needed to spread. When he left and went down to Montgomery Street into Larry's building, I know that at that time there still was a close relationship between Bill and Tommy.

Riess: But it was Larry's building first?

Baylis: Larry bought the building. The thing is that his wife, the Schumann family, were involved in it. But Larry bought it. Then Wurster moved down. Then there were several designers who moved in.

Riess: What jobs in particular did Doug work on when he was in Tommy's office?

Baylis: Well, I think that there was still work going on at Pasatiempo. He worked in Parkmerced most of the time when he was there. I think that was it, and I think he may have worked on one of the Gallo projects. I'm not sure. But I know that Doug was familiar with the jobs because we talked about it a lot.

Riess: The year that Aalto came out was he there?

Baylis: Oh, well, Aalto was here. Yes, in fact Doug and I were married in '48. Doug was in business for himself then when Aalto came out because Tommy made an arrangement for Aalto about getting furniture. So he said to Doug, "Anything you want?" So our first furniture was Aalto furniture.

Riess: Have you managed to hang on to it?

Baylis: My mother has it. She just loves it. It's very funny that it has gone through all the years and yellowed, but it's still basic kind of furniture. We reached the point where we decided we were not the Scandinavian style, much more eclectic.

Also when Burle-Marx came from South America, Tommy put together an evening. I guess that was the early fifties. We all got to meet Burle-Marx. It was a wonderful, wonderful evening in which he talked at great length about landscape architecture in Brazil.

Riess: Do you think that an event like that really is a pivotal kind of thing?

Baylis: I think it is. I think it does have an effect that certainly, for those who heard it, I'm sure they would never forget. It was one of those things that did have an effect. Tommy seemed to have met quite a few people of that kind, with that outreach that Marx had.

Riess: Yes, he was a real world traveler.

It's interesting that there's a certain integrity then about everything Chuch does. Where do you see Burle-Marx in what Tommy does?

Baylis: Not at all, no.

One of the marvelous stories that Marx told that night was the fact that he'd had problems of one sort or another, but one problem that really disturbed him was that he had done this marvelous garden and the ghosts came in and ate the plants. And somebody interpreted afterwards what he was trying to say was the "goats." It made it sound like "ghosts" that ate the plants.

Riess: And you all sat there spellbound.

Baylis: Spellbound trying to think the ghost of what! [Laughs]

Riess: Do you recall other things like that?

Baylis: Oh, an interesting thing was that Tommy went to Sweden. I specifically remember that when he came back he had ordered some Reda units. I have one over here. They're glass drawers that fit into a little cabinet. They're now made out of plastic.

Riess: Yes, what are they called?

Baylis: Well, this is called reda, R-E-D-A, they're Swedish. The thing about it is that Tommy ordered one and they sent him eight. So he said to Doug one day, "Would you like one?" Doug said, "Sure." So we had it for years until we remodeled this house and then were able to just build a place for it. I've enjoyed it so much. I was very pleased that I got that at the time when it was all glass. Yes, very special. I'm trying to think of other things that came into our life because of Tommy.

Oh, when Doug told him he was going to marry me, Tommy said, "Well, if you'd like to have the house down in the country, you can have it for the honeymoon." Doug didn't tell me what was going on. We were married on a Saturday afternoon up in Sonoma, Glen Ellen country, and drove down to Tommy's. He then told me.

We arrived late at night and there were mothballs on the bed. The house hadn't been used for a long, long time. Then the next morning we were invited to go to the [Charles] Martins, who had a place at Aptos. Betsy was there and Tommy. They had come down for the Sunday. So we drove up and Tommy came up and put his arms around me and gave me a great big kiss and Betsy couldn't figure out what was going on.

Then she was so upset when she found out that we had been to the house, "it was awful, it wasn't cleaned," and nothing was right. She apologized. And I said, "Betsy, we had the most marvelous

Baylis: breakfast. We had coffee that was there. There were coffee beans which we ground. There was a can of grapefruit. And there was some dry zwieback." I said, "This was our wedding breakfast!" It was very funny. But Tommy was so pleased that he had put this thing over and hadn't told her. It was his little secret. It was a wonderful thing. So we had four or five days there.

But Doug being an asthmatic, developed violent attacks in the evening. We couldn't understand it. Maybe he was allergic to me or something. We decided we'd have to go back to the city. The bedroom was upstairs and coming down the stairs I slipped and fell and bounced down on my spine, and at that point the adrenaline shot into Doug to such an extent that the asthma disappeared. There wasn't anything wrong. As soon as he found out that I was okay, the asthma came back. It was one of those strange things that can happen. So we left, but what turned out was that it was the acacia which was in bloom and with the heavy fogs every night the fog was holding the pollen down. It was just really doing him in. He had never had that problem before.

Riess: That's interesting. I thought you were going to find out it was the mothballs.

Baylis: Well, I thought about that you know. Because I cleaned the house thoroughly the next day. I thought, "Well, this is silly. Let's go ahead and make it right." So it was a very special and a very memorable honeymoon because it was such a beautiful place. It was in January. The weather was just superb. It was warm and wonderful so we did enjoy it. I got to see the Gregory farmhouse at that time which to me was such a superb structure.

Also at that point Tommy's house, they had been working on it a lot. It was an old place, but it was so well put together.

Riess: This is the one in Scotts Valley?

Baylis: Yes, Scotts Valley.

A little Franklin stove, and in fact we have a Franklin here. I'm sure it was related to the fact that at that point it seemed like such a wonderful kind of way to heat.

2) Publications: Garden Books and Magazines

Riess: This is the Martin house, isn't it? [looking at cover of 1948 San Francisco Museum of Art Landscape Design catalog]

Baylis: That's the Martin house, right.

Riess: So that was in the process?

Baylis: Yes, it was in the process. The deck was in when we were there, '48. Then we put this book together. I did the layout for it.

Riess: Why did that happen?

Baylis: Just that there was a national landscape architecture meeting here in California in '48. It was held in the San Francisco Museum. There was an exhibit of landscape architecture at the museum. So it ended up they decided to put out this booklet. Doug and I put it together and got it published.

Riess: I wish it said that.

Baylis: It says something in the back. I think there was a credit line at the very back or not. Is there?

Riess: No. Oh, wait. Yes. "Catalogue, layout and design--Maggie Baylis"

Baylis: I'd been involved in advertising before so it was one of those things I could do. Then when Tommy wanted to do his first book I worked with him on it. I did layouts for him. We put kind of a rough together for the book.

Then he went off to New York, talked to publishers, talked to Elizabeth Gordon, and she said, "Well, that's silly." She said, "I can pay you more than you're going to get out of that book." So she took the material and that was the first batch of things, as far as I know, the first things that appeared in House Beautiful.

Riess: I had thought that the book was based on the magazine.

Baylis: The book that came out, Gardens are for People, was really not the original book. This was another book that was finally put together. And Tommy put that together because by that time he had the feel of how he would put the book together. He went ahead, and I didn't have anything to do with that. But the first one was more because of my background that I could help on this thing.

Riess: The first one is called Gardens are for People, isn't it? The other one is Your Private World.

Baylis: Yes, but the book I mean was before the first book. There was a book before that is what I'm trying to say, before Gardens are for People, that was put together and then became magazine articles. Then the first real book that came out, Gardens are for People, was the one that Tommy put together himself. And did the copy on it, did the whole thing. But he was getting the feel of how you did this, how you did the mechanics. And that's why I was a part of it.

We loved Tommy and it was just so much fun to work on it. It never occurred to me other than, "This is just great. I'm delighted and I'm flattered to work with him." It was such a pleasure. He gave you that feeling. It was just marvelous.

Riess: Then the format of that real first book, the organization of it and the inclusion of all the historical references, was that Tommy?

Baylis: That was Tommy, then. That was Tommy because what he did was take from the original thinking that he had and he was able to put that all together. He wrote the whole thing as far as I know. This was his contribution. And it was his decision about what would go in and what pictures would be used and how they would be used. Tommy fell into a situation. All he needed was a little direction and he could take hold and he could make it. And he did. He did a beautiful job I thought, that first one.

Riess: It's a great book. And it's interesting that at this real peak in his career that he would want to take the time to do this.

Baylis: Well, the thing was he had so many photographs. It made it worthwhile to do this. There must have been some other reason. I think because of what appeared in House Beautiful, that the publishers were then much more aware of who Thomas Church was.

In the same way that Sunset really did more toward educating the public to what a landscape architect is, more than any other medium, meant that they actually led the way. Tommy had quite a few things published in Sunset before he had things published in the east. That was because Walter Doty, who was then the editor of Sunset, was so aware of what Tommy was doing about the business of how people lived.

This was Walter's whole concept; this was the thing that he really kept working on for Sunset. And the Lanes were not the least bit happy about it. They were satisfied to keep on a Better Homes and Gardens pattern because that's where Mr. Lane senior came from, both he and his wife.

Riess: Better Homes and Gardens just is more of a showing of things and pictures?

Baylis: Yes, well it was at that time. They always said that if they put either roses or apple pie on the cover, they could just sell a million copies. It was that kind of an attitude about life. Life was just as simple as that, which of course it never has been.

Mr. Doty was an experimenter. He kept looking for and seeking out the young people, the people who were doing things both in architecture and landscape architecture, which were concerned with how people live. Doug and Doty were extremely close, did a lot of arguing over the years, but still both going in the same general direction. Walter recognized in Tommy this remarkable subconscious, I think, unforced kind of approach to the garden.

Riess: Yes, that's interesting. It sounds as if Tommy, like Doug, felt that the message was really important. And it was important for him to get out the message.

Baylis: I think this is probably why he was motivated. I don't think there was any other reason. He really felt it was time to bring forth this western approach to the profession and what was happening here.

Riess: Oh, but you don't look at Gardens are for People as a western book, do you?

Baylis: No, it's not a western book, but the gardens that are in there are simply not gardens that you think of in terms of south or east. So I only use the word "western" as a description. It's not that acceptable obviously.

Riess: Certainly he solves problems that are western problems. I've not looked at the introduction to the book to see whether he localizes it in that way.

Baylis: I don't know either. It's funny, I don't remember about the introduction in that book. Been so long since I've looked at it.

Riess: It's really a remarkable book. He attempts an enormous amount.

Baylis: Yes, that's right. And in the east James Rose, who was a friend of Tommy's, produced a book also. But that was the eastern viewpoint. It was interesting seeing the two books to contrast the subtle differences of what Tommy presented. Although both of them were working in a field where there was money, where they could produce results, the results were strikingly different. But the people in the east began to recognize when House Beautiful pushed this trend

Baylis: to such an extent that they were fascinated by what was happening. People in Texas and the people in Connecticut were all beginning to knock on Tommy's door because they saw something they admired.

Riess: I guess so much of it I sort of take for granted. Was there something in Gardens are for People that was new to people who picked up that book? Or was it already historical, when it came out?

Baylis: A lot of the things had appeared in Sunset or in House Beautiful before the book came out. But I think that Tommy was able to furnish some fresh photography for it, some fresh philosophy also. So it was newsworthy; it was interesting.

Riess: I often ask whether Tommy really was a theoretician or whether he just is dealt with by historians and then he's seen as the theoretician.

Baylis: That's interesting. It's a question I couldn't answer. I really don't know.

Riess: In general I don't think of landscape architects and architects as a particularly articulate group. So the fact that he chose to be so articulate, maybe you've just given the answer, that it was just really important for him to get himself together and educate people.

Baylis: I think it was just literally to get himself together. I had that feeling. I don't think it was ever expressed that there was a motive at the time that he decided. It was just, 'Hey, it's time to do a book. I really ought to get this thing out. I've got so much stuff here. I ought to get a book out.' That was the impression I had, that it was naive as that. I don't know any more than that.

Riess: Yes, because even for a modest man, that is a little naive.

Baylis: Yes, it is.

Doug and I did a book on Gordon Drake. It never occurred to Doug that he ought to get a book out or he ought to have his name on something, but rather here was something that we really ought to get printed because it was so damn good. So we did a book with Reinhold. They were going to do a series on architects. They decided to use that as their stepping stone.

George Sanderson was the editor of Progressive Architecture at that time and a friend of Gordon's, so it worked out extremely well, and we did do a book. And again, not as something that was a showoff piece, but it was "This is important. Somebody's got to see this." Strangely enough through the years I have had many people come and

Baylis: tell me they still had a copy of this book. There were only 5,000 printed. But what an effect this man had had on--I should say, architects have said what an effect it had had upon them as professionals. It was a marvelous thing. Particularly since Doug has died, I've had several people come and knock on my door and say, "I've got this book." It's a nice thing to think, "Well, yes, you did say something" or "you did do something that did leave a mark on someone else." I don't know whether Tommy felt this or not, but I'm sure he was told it. Whether he did it intentionally or not, I don't know.

Riess: Yes, it really is a treasured book. Betsy says the plates were kept by House Beautiful. There's no way of reprinting it.

Baylis: Speaking of that, there was a man named Sam Newsom, who lived in Japan for many years, and he collected some marvelous things from Japan and put together a book many, many years ago. He was a landscape gardener. It was a superb book. All of the plates were destroyed; I guess it was during the war in Japan. So then they did issue another copy but they had to make a copy of a copy. It was a rather poor imitation of the original. But these things must be reissued, even in modest form, for the future. Out of nowhere something strange can happen. It seems such a shame not to reprint because they were wonderful records of a time that's gone.

Tommy probably has most of the photographs, you know, copies of the photographs. But to produce it again would be much too expensive. In those days you could put out a book at a price that was within reason; today, you're into the \$25, \$30 cocktail table kind of thing, if you want to get out something like Gardens are for People. And there just isn't the market there.

Riess: Your background is in advertising?

Baylis: Actually, I started out to be an architect. Then I had to give it up. I got involved with advertising. Then during the war I worked with the Army in Hawaii as a civilian doing graphics. So I got into that facet. I was interested in it. I came back, opened a little graphics studio. Then I met Doug, who proceeded to get me the job at Sunset. I worked at Sunset for four years.

Riess: Oh, so that's why you're so familiar with Sunset.

Baylis: Yes, that's why I'm very familiar with that period. I was assistant art director. There were only two of us. Now I think they have seven or eight people, you know, the magazine has grown to such size. I was there from '47 to '51, which was a growth period for them.

Baylis: Then they decided to move down to Menlo when they built that building, and they wanted everyone to move. Incidentally, Tommy did the site planning and overall landscaping of Sunset's property-- and it has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors through the years. I was not about to move so that was the period that I went to work with Doug. We bought this building in '51. That worked out very well.

I would say that Sunset had a very distinct effect on my life, that working with these people, working with Mr. Doty, I certainly learned more about writing than I have from anyone else. I was extremely lucky. I was also lucky to fall in with Doug's profession. It wasn't mine, yet I had an awareness of where he was going and what he was doing and could work with him. It was a good kind of training ground for what I've done since he's gone.

Riess: I wonder when the Lanes hired Doty if they had some inkling of a new direction to go when they gave him that editorship.

Baylis: I really don't know whether they had any idea. They just had found a rare editor.

Doty was an account executive for Lord and Thomas advertising agency. He'd been in advertising, but he had a kind of drive which I think fascinated the Lanes. He fought for what he believed in. He was always fighting to get these things. He did more to develop young architects, as well as landscape architects! He was always working on it. He realized that the magazine didn't have much money so he was looking for people with ideas: where is it going? what's the direction? Particularly after the war there was that whole new thing, what is going to happen? where are we going to land?

In 1951, when I left, the current editor came in, Proctor Mellquist, and Walter was then sort of kicked upstairs. Mellquist developed the magazine as it is today, with emphasis on actual recording of western living, rather than as an idea source of how living might be improved. Doty performed a lot of promotional work for them in later years. Then slowly pulled himself away. He still is connected with Sunset but he then took on the job of editor for Ortho Books and he's been responsible for all of their recent successes, setting their direction. It's been fascinating. It wasn't until he was 79 that he put his name on a book. Because the Lanes didn't want him to have his name attached to anything. They really raised hell.

Riess: His name isn't on the Ortho books?

Baylis: No, it's only one book that it's on. It's All About Vegetables. That's the only one. It has sold over a million and a half copies.

Riess: You know, I never see Ortho Books around. I almost feel like the distributors have it against--

Baylis: The whole thing is the problem with distributors. So they're doing a lot of changing. They're going through a big thing now. But Walter is now 82 or something like that and almost blind, and they're looking for someone young to take over. Yet, here's this man who still has the keenest mind imaginable! He is fabulous. He's just a amazing guy! Have you talked to him?

Riess: Yes, I talked to him. I think he's an amazing guy, and he doesn't seem to be daunted by any of that.

Baylis: No, he's lived by fire his whole life. He just keeps on going.

Riess: I can see that his push for people to publish and to articulate their ideas must be very significant.

Baylis: It is significant, right.

Riess: Tommy sometimes even had what looked to be a byline in Sunset.

Baylis: Well, they would mention his name. Doug got a great deal of business because whenever anything he did was published in Sunset, we would have people call us about gardens or garden plants, what have you.

Doug finally pulled away from residential and I would say for the last 12 years of his career he did none. He just didn't want to do residential. He preferred to do industrial, commercial, for the very reason that he was interested in so many other things, that he began to feel that when he did a residential--as with Tommy--there's a personal kind of thing. But he was always dealing with the husband and the wife, each of whom had different ideas and goals and very often, in the beginning, a marriage that was about to break up. "Let's buy a house and then this will save the marriage." It's like, "Let's have a baby. It'll save the marriage."

In those days building a new house was the common thing to do. You looked for something different, to change the environment, maybe everything would be all right. And there were still the family problems that were being solved. He said, "I find I'm being a psychiatrist. I don't enjoy that."

Riess: I've heard that before. I've experienced it myself. [Laughter] Everybody says that Tommy is the only one who could do it, get through that.

Baylis: Yes, that's right. Somehow or another, he is the one man who managed it. I don't know what his magic was. Except that he was Tommy.

Riess: Yes, really. Well, it sounds like with that kind of magic, he could have been in any sort of business.

I'm awfully glad that I just had this [1948 San Francisco Museum of Art Landscape Design catalog] lying here.

Baylis: Well, I'm delighted. There was another one that came out, then, in 1958 which we put together, but the credit was given to Burt Litton at Berkeley, because he had to publish or perish. It seemed like one of those logical moments, "Okay, here's a chance for him." Well, then they hired someone professionally to tie it together at the last minute. That was fine, it didn't matter, but it was another good one. There was some talk in '68 of trying to do another one because of the 10-year spacing.

Baylis: I was pleased to read the quote.*

Riess: It really did seem like a fairly strong statement. Have we padded that out enough?

Baylis: Well, I would say in relationship to the photographs that I'm sure Tommy's recording his work was a strong influence on Doug to photograph his own work and others'.

And all through his life he continued to take photographs, primarily of things related to landscape architecture. He would take some open landscapes, but basically he wasn't interested in anything except seeing what others had done and also recording some things that he had done. I have about 3 or 4,000 slides to go through. That's on my agenda when I get back. So it will be very interesting. There are many duplicates so I'm in hopes that I can put together two or three sets. One of them I know goes to Cal Poly; I've already promised. We'll see where else. Somebody would like to have them, I'm sure.

*In the interviewer's letter to Baylis she quotes Doug Baylis' answer to a question of TDC's formula for success: "The moment you have gardens made and some good photographs, it follows. He photographed his own gardens. He works and turns out gardens. Who else does that?"

Baylis: But he did not get involved in the physical business of dark-room that Tommy did. Tommy did so much of his own darkroom work. Because this was something he enjoyed doing.

Riess: When you said that both Tommy and Doug worked with a soft pencil, and that they were happy with the back of the envelope, do you think that they are more oriented to the artistic side of things?

Baylis: I doubt it. I think, for instance, Larry primarily was interested in the sculptural, the art form, that sort of thing. I can only really speak for Doug. I can't speak for Tommy because I don't know him that well.

But I know that Doug was influenced more, and everything he did was, "If I put this here and put that there, what result will happen? Does this mean that it's easier for someone to do something he or she would like to do?" It was related to how people live. This was the real structuring. The form then was related to what is the ultimate result, what's going to happen. It was the building of the form.

Literally, what both Doug and Tommy did was that they built a framework. Within that framework you could keep changing the picture, but it was still a damn good garden, even if there was nothing there. This was what both of those men seemed to me to produce, where I think some of the more formal, some of the more advanced designs say that Royston and the others have done, are concerned with the design concept of the garden.

But I don't know that they ever thought in those terms, that it's as simple as that. It's just like if you build the right house, it doesn't matter what you do to it, it's still a great house. The intent was, for both of them, to produce a living-in garden which, no matter what was done to it, would still be a good one--and in Tommy's instance, a great one.

Riess: No matter who lives in it.

Baylis: No matter who lives in it, right. There's a house that Doug did over in Belvedere that's had several owners. Each owner moved in and did different things within the garden, but still it's such a basic, simple thing. The woman who lives there now is in her 70s. She owned it, sold it, bought it back, brought back her favorite plants, loves it.

It's one of the nicest things to think about that you can do something so simple, but that it works. That you think, "Well, this is good." I think this is probably the motive, the thing that

Baylis: both of them strove for. I don't know about the others. As I say, I've seen other gardens and seen many photographs and I keep coming back and I find an empathy with what Tommy does and what Doug did during the period that he was doing them.

3) Some Thoughts About Tommy, Betsy, and the Past

Baylis: I had one little story. It's an odd kind of thing. I was going to remember to tell you. About two and a half years ago perhaps it was, I was asked to deliver a plan on Sansome Street, one of Doug's plans for something he had done some time ago. As I walked down Jackson Street I walked past Tommy's office and I saw him up there. I had the strangest sensation, "If I don't walk in and see Tommy right now, I may never see Tommy again." I've never had that happen to me. It was psychic in a sense. So I went in and I talked to him for 20 minutes.

Tommy was feeling fine. It was before the onslaught of this thing. It was such a marvelous, warm, friendly moment, you know, because it was just one of those things where I didn't have anything to offer Tommy. It was just that I wanted to talk to him. I was so pleased. And I thought about it after and often. Because it never occurred to me that this tragedy would strike Tommy's life because he was durable. He was just going to go on and on. There wasn't anything like Tommy. He was so special. He just seemed to be without end.

Riess: That's very good that you did that. I can see that.

Baylis: Well, it's so rare. As I said, it never had happened to me.

Riess: I've gathered from some people that they didn't feel that they really knew him. I don't know. Now I feel like asking you, but it's really sort of hard, you know whether you really felt that you did have a personal relationship with him.

Baylis: I knew Tommy with feeling. I felt good about Tommy. I felt I knew a lot about him. Yet, when you mentioned this and when the letter came, I thought, "Oh dear, I really don't know very much. I don't know anything about his personal life, his habits, and these things that are part of a man's life." But I felt close to Tommy always when I was near him. I still do, even though I haven't seen him. I feel a tremendous impact has been made on my life because of this man. Always there are some people who will touch you. You know. I felt that and I feel it.

Baylis: I think the private Tommy was something else. You see, Doug was a private person, too. I recognize there were areas that were his areas which had to be respected. It was very important. Tommy must have had similar kinds of areas.

I remember the joy when he had his fiftieth birthday. There was a party. Something about going to Paris. Did Betsy or anyone talk about that? I think they went to Paris for his fiftieth birthday.

Riess: No. I had a feeling they went to Paris practically every year.

Baylis: Well, they went to Europe often. But this was one of those special things that he was going to go back. Because he had been there earlier, and then he'd gone to Sweden. He had this marvelous visit. That's when he met Aalto. That was much, much earlier--there was a 20 year period or something in between there.

But he and Punk had both come out from Ohio together--
Incidentally, have you talked with Mrs. Vaughan?

Riess: No, I haven't.

Baylis: Well, Beulah is a psychiatrist, I think I'm right in saying. She's retired and lives in Point Richmond, in their home. She may have some wonderful stories about this.

Riess: She was Punk Vaughan's second wife?

Baylis: Yes, the second wife. A very remarkable woman in her own way. She probably would be able to give you some insights into the Church situation because I'm sure Punk may have talked to her through the years.

Riess: It sounds like a good idea.* David Streatfield comments that after Doug and Royston and Halprin, "Tommy never hired any highly creative people again."

Baylis: As far as I know, there were always special people who worked there but not to match the early era.

Riess: I would like to know why. Do you think that the nature of the people who wanted to come and work in the office changed?

Baylis: I would guess that. I would guess that it was a rare period, as sometimes happens in history, where you get a group of people who will come along in one period, all of whom are strong and individual personalities, and then you'll go through another period of drought.

*"...by the time we were married in the early 1950s, his working relationship with Tommy Church had been over for a long time. Although we remained personal friends of the Churches, we actually saw very little of them. I have no first-hand knowledge of anything concerning

Baylis: I think this is it, that these were very competent--Casey certainly was talented and Jack also--but I just have a feeling that the ones who made the mark were all of that one period. I think it's, as I say, that there are times in history, as in music or anything else, that there are groups of people who become outstanding.

Riess: Do you have any impressions of Marie Harbeck in the office?

Baylis: I don't have any impressions of her at all. Only from what June has mentioned. Doug never talked much about Marie. But then he wasn't really conscious of women particularly. That was the period that again Tommy recognized, that it was time that he got out. [Laughs]

Riess: That's very interesting. Well, of course you feel very fond of Tommy because of that connection also.

Baylis: Yes, I really do. I've been very grateful to him that he did what he did when he did it.

It's too difficult to know whether what one says has any value because all you can do is ramble and hope that it contributes a little.

Riess: Well, you ramble so convincingly that I have questions that I haven't needed to ask because your rambles are as much to the point as my questions.

Baylis: It seems quite unorganized, but it's difficult to look back.

I have just received a questionnaire from the Fellows at ASLA. They asked me if I would fill it out about what Doug did. It's difficult to pinpoint times even though I always thought I kept track of dates. Doug was an Art Commissioner here in San Francisco for eight years. Before Tommy took over the University of California, Doug was the landscape architect on the campus for three years. But then when Tommy came on, he took it, the whole thing. He took all the campuses. And managed and put that thing together. I thought that was quite a remarkable job at this time of his life. He had a very strong hand in what happened to the various campuses. It was a tremendous contribution to the University of California.

Riess: It is remarkable, isn't it?

Baylis: Yes, I know because of how hard Doug worked for the three years for one campus, to establish order, to introduce fresh ideas.

Riess: Well, he must have had an ability to pace himself and not feel pushed.

Tommy's career that isn't known to everyone, and actually have a rather sketchy knowledge of even Punk's professional activities in the early days. I did, of course, hear occasional anecdotes, but I think the best person from whom to get a real flavor of those times would be to interview Harold Watkin..." Buelah Parker Vaughan

Baylis: Yes, and I think that's another facet of Tommy. I don't think people could push him. I remember one funny incident right here in our neighborhood. A woman wanted him to come because Wurster had remodeled her house. It's up on top of Russian Hill. She wanted Tommy. He wasn't about to come. Finally, he grudgingly said he would come.

Of course, she was just so annoyed because he came and said, "I don't think you can have a tree."

And she said, "But I've got to have a tree."

"All right," he said, "We'll get the tree here. Then I'll tell you where to put it."

They had to get a big piece of equipment, a great gadget to lift the tree up. Tommy stood across the street and kept motioning this way, that way and the tree went in and that was it. [Laughter]

She never has quite gotten over it. She was the head of the Waves during the war. She was a woman of rather remarkable abilities herself. But she never could quite accept the fact that Tommy wouldn't do any more than the back of the envelope kind of drawing.

Tommy wasn't one to be pushed. This is marvelous because he could still endear himself to most people. All through the years he could handle these situations in a way that no one else probably could have done it. It's Tommy magic as far as I'm concerned.

Riess: He has said the minority group that he felt sorriest for is the very rich or something like that.

Baylis: Yes, and he always said, "I love ladies with big hats."

I know that even with personal relationships that I watched on rare occasions, that Tommy could handle a conversation, but he could move away from the conversation and into another. This in itself is a feat because I always have found it difficult when I'm with a group of people and I suddenly get trapped. Tommy somehow managed to always talk to everyone at the Christmas party. He moved from group to group or from people to people. But it was personal. And every time he stopped, you had a feeling he was really listening to you. I think that was very important.

It is funny. Of all the things I can think about at the Christmas parties, I see there a great plate of the most delicious deviled eggs. Betsy would always bring a plate of deviled eggs to the party. That was the first place I would reach because I knew that they were special.

Baylis: Betsy is a superb cook, as you probably know. She studied cooking. She handles it well. I know that she had a strong influence in my thinking in the way one served food, that even if it wasn't very fancy, if you served it attractively on beautiful dishes or in an interesting way, it didn't really matter what you were serving. Flavor, of course, is important. Betsy did influence me because her kitchen was such a superb working kitchen.

Tommy was marvelous with spur-of-the-moment [cooking]. Doug and I were there one night and he said, "Stay. I'll fix you some eggs." He did this marvelous egg thing with herbs and eggs in an omelette, a little cream. All of a sudden, we were sitting at the table eating supper. It was just so simple. He, too, had this kind of awareness. He let Betsy have all sorts of wonderful things. She had marvelous antiques that she picked up and things. But he appreciated them.

Oh, and then when they remodeled that house and he went out to the Western Addition where wreckers were pulling down all of these old buildings, he kept finding wonderful wood artifacts, carved things, so they could add them to the house on Hyde Street. This was an avocation; he just loved the idea of going out and scrounging and then bringing back these things, which produced this perfectly beautiful Victorian they live in.

But I know that Betsy, as I say, had a strong influence on how I learned. When I first came to San Francisco there were many things to learn. But from Betsy I learned how people lived with style and taste in this gracious manner which she offered.

Riess: What was her reputation, apart from that, when you first came?

Baylis: I remember Doug talking about Betsy, that he admired her taste. I was conscious of the combinations of things that she had and the way that she used them. I was, oh! enamored of this marvelous woman, you know, what she had done and what she is doing right now. And, of course, I was so grateful to have the place for the honeymoon. That was fun--the little house down there.

And Tommy did hooked rugs at one time. Did anyone ever tell you that? Several were there in 1948.

Riess: Yes, somebody told me that, Fran Violich told me that. Now what was that all about?

Baylis: He hooked rugs, rag rugs. They were in the house down in the country. Doug thought it was a neat idea. Here Tommy had designed and executed all these marvelous rugs, abstractions, very tastefully done. They represented a facet of this man completely apart from his

Baylis: professional side. The rugs were small so they'd just be picked up and you could shake them to clean them.

And, of course, he planted the grapes all the way around the little house, he had his own little vineyard, and that was a loving touch.

[Added in editing]

Riess: Want to expand on this ending?

Baylis: After all these words, there are always moments when one wants to redo them with more careful thoughts. But I'm very grateful for the invitation you offered me, Suzanne, because it forces me to vacuum out the dusty spaces and to look with fresh expression on not only Tommy, but also others who have added much to my life.

Thank you--and not only for myself, but for all others who come who will have a rare opportunity to know this Tommy Church who brought his profession to a new stature. And also gain insight into a beautiful human being, through the sharings of his admirers.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Jack Stafford

AN ASSOCIATE SURVEYS THE CHURCH OFFICE, 1946-1965

Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

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Jack Stafford
February 23, 1976
Interview held at his office in Palo Alto

1) Post-War Study of Landscape Architecture, U.C.

Riess: Let's talk about your early history first. Where are you from?

Stafford: I was born and raised in Wyoming and spent the first part of my young life taking pre-med at the University of Wyoming and then went into the service. I was in the Air Force. And after I got discharged I began to wonder what to do. In those days everybody said, "Oh, gee, we ought to get a job with the airlines because we've done all this flying and we're so good," and so I went back to Wyoming and was fortunate to get a job with an airline, but after six months realized I didn't like that.

While in the Air Force I had married. My wife was from San Francisco so we said the heck with this and we packed up and moved back to San Francisco. And somehow in the back of my mind I had always thought I might be interested in the nursery business, so I started looking into that and I traveled all over the Bay Area for two or three weeks talking to nurserymen--even in Sacramento where we had some friends. And most everyplace I went the nurserymen were a little reluctant to recommend it as a great business, as far as making a lot of money, but they were all very helpful and gave me a lot of tips on what I should do about going to school.

As I went around and talked about the nursery industry, the subject of landscape architecture was presented to me. It was a profession I had never heard about, so I got the bulletin from Cal and decided, "Gee, that sounds kind of interesting." Then fortunately, right at that same time, in January of 1946, I was able to meet Mr. Church and find out what a landscape architect was.

Riess: How did that come about?

Stafford: Well, it was arranged through somebody that I met, who knew Tommy. So, from then on I was sold--on him and the profession. He was able to tell me about some people that I could find a job with in

Stafford: the field, which was the best experience I could have gotten before going back to school.

Riess: What was Mr. Church like to talk to?

Stafford: He was very encouraging and very kind and understanding of my situation and right away said, "Well, we ought to put you to work. Come to the Peninsula with us on a field trip." Then after one or two other conferences with him he said, "When you're through school I'd like to have you come to work for me," something like that.

Riess: Did you go into a graduate program?

Stafford: No, I entered as a sophomore, and I had so many credits in chemistry and that type of thing from pre-med that I had to start over with the undergraduate course that they offered. But it was easy, much easier than before. The difficult thing was learning to draw and draft because I had never done any of that sort of thing.

It was hard for me to begin to understand the design field and the way people thought about design, architects--it was all so new. Fortunately somehow or another I absorbed the philosophies of Mr. Church and some of the other people that helped me a great deal to realize what it was all about, because unless you start out thinking you're a designer, you have to learn to be one, and to think like one. And that was the hard part for me.

Riess: You got a lot of help out of the school, how about in the school?

Stafford: Same thing. Professor Vaughan was head of the department at the time--he and Mr. Church were very good friends and worked together for some years--and he was very helpful and very understanding. I suspect part of it was the fact that in those days there were a lot of people coming back out of the service and almost everybody was knocking themselves out to help the students as much as possible. And the students in general were older, so most of us knew that this was something that we were serious about, rather than taking a course just because it sounded easy.

Riess: Were any of the younger professionals teaching then, like Royston?

Stafford: Royston was teaching part time, and then the second or third year he was teaching some of the major design courses.

Riess: And was it substantially different to take the courses from him, one of the younger people, than it was to take them from Vaughan, or Gregg? Did it make landscape architecture into another kind of field?

Stafford: It was quite different, particularly with Mr. Royston, and that was a very interesting experience for me. My last year in school I was working part time in Mr. Church's office, and I had been working summers in the field for a contractor who built a lot of his gardens, Floyd Gerow, so I got to know his techniques and his philosophy quite well and it was interesting then to have to be taking a course under Royston. [Laughter] But we got along fine.

Riess: Was there a different philosophy of design there?

Stafford: Well, of course Church is credited with being the forerunner of the new techniques in designing gardens, or the new philosophy, whatever you want to call it. He was never as vocal about his way of doing things, possibly, as Royston might be, but of course there Royston was an instructor and Church was practicing, so it's hard to know what Church might have said if he'd been a professor. Although over the years I've listened to him speak to clients and people of all kinds about design and it's hard to explain, I wish I could explain it, but he's different, a different personality than Royston. Royston was a very intense person with lots of new ideas. Have you met him?

Riess: Not yet.

Stafford: Once you meet him I think you'll understand what I'm trying to say. He used to be very ethereal, with a far-out sort of philosophy about things. Mr. Church is down to earth. He always used to say, "It doesn't mean a thing if your design is the greatest-looking thing you've ever done unless it all works properly." By that meaning that people could live in it and it functions to fill their needs.

Riess: So he was more the servant of the client, would you say, in that way, than Royston?

Stafford: I don't know. I know that he took great pains to make sure the client got something that they wanted or thought they wanted and that it worked properly for them.

Riess: I think we got into this because I wondered whether you felt you were getting two messages, between your schooling and your apprenticeship with Church?

Stafford: At the time I was getting two messages and as I say it was kind of a unique position to be in. But we got a message from almost anybody we talked to, you know. Professor Shepherd, the man who taught plant materials courses, his philosophies of design were quite interesting too. He was an older man. But we learned from

Stafford: everybody that we talked to. I think Gregg retired right after the first semester that I was there, so we didn't have much contact with him. Vaughan, and Mr. [Burt] Litton came along about that time.

But looking back, and talking to some of the students recently, they had an excellent course at the time. We learned the fundamentals of the engineering portion, the plant materials, basic design and ideas and philosophies, and it was well done. It was probably much better preparation for being able to go out and get a job and really understand how things are built, and why, than maybe the students have now, at Berkeley at least.

Riess: Because the profession has gotten so diffuse?

Stafford: That's my guess. And the city planning and regional planning field has become so important at Berkeley.

Riess: When you were a student, what gardens were you taken to? What kind of field trips did you do?

Stafford: A lot of the old gardens in Berkeley and some in San Francisco.

Riess: How about early Church work, such as at Pasatiempo. Was that pointed out?

Stafford: Yes, they had a summer field trip program that you had to participate in at least one summer of your time at Berkeley and I think that lasted three or four weeks at least, and we toured quite a bit. As I remember we went all over--San Rafael, down the Peninsula, East Bay, and it seems to me we went up to the Napa area, and we saw lots of things.

Riess: But that was not the rule during the school year?

Stafford: They used to encourage us to go on field trips of our own, and we used to go once a month at least with Shepherd on a plant identification type course. We'd go out and look at some of the old gardens and see what the plant materials were like when they were thirty years old.

Riess: Like the McDuffie garden in Berkeley? Can you recall others?

Stafford: I don't remember the names of them, but I would guess most were gardens that Shepherd had done; there were a few gardens that Church had done, and others.

- Stafford: But it was a very well-organized curriculum. The civil engineering, plant materials and the opportunity to take an art course and dabble around in paint, learn how to draft--you see, we took basic architecture courses as well. It was all very well-integrated, and just what I needed.
- Riess: It looked like a department that had a good time; everyone was close.
- Stafford: Yes, they always had a picnic every spring, and the students all got along well. Several of us had children at that time.
- Riess: Did you all expect to get into offices when you got out? Was it a boom time?
- Stafford: Oh yes, I think for the three or four years that I was at Berkeley nobody had any problems getting jobs.

2) The Church Office

- Riess: When you started in with Church who else was in the office?
- Stafford: I started in January 1950 and the other people were Casey Kawamoto, June Meehan, Larry Halprin. And then very shortly after that two architects were working with Mr. Church--George Rockrise and Gerry Milono. They actually designed some houses as employees of Tommy's for Tommy's clients. That was an interesting experience, they did some very nice things.
- Riess: People were calling Thomas Church Associates for a whole--
- Stafford: Complete design.
- Riess: I thought that sort of grand thing was what he was trying to avoid, that he wanted a small, personal practice.
- Stafford: Well, he gave it up quite rapidly after he realized what a complicated thing it got to be--not complicated, necessarily, but how much work was involved for him.
- Riess: To supervise all of that?
- Stafford: Yes.
- Riess: How did the office run when it was that large?

Stafford: Each person had certain projects assigned to them to do. Casey and myself, being young and right out of school, our abilities were limited, so we mostly did working drawings and planting plans and blowing up base maps, sort of the more fundamental, simple things. June had been there since before the war. She answered the phone and took care of client relationships as well as designing.

Riess: Did she work with Tommy's sketches, or did she design herself?

Stafford: Both, but he did the preliminary designs.

Riess: Was it a sketchy sketch?

Stafford: Sometimes, but they were certainly well thought out. Most of the grades would show, and types of materials. He was a very prolific guy when he got a pencil in his hand and many Monday mornings we would come to work and he had designed two or three gardens over the weekend and everybody had more to do than they could handle. So we were kept very, very busy.

Later he had to get a bookkeeper--no, he had a bookkeeper, but a secretary. June used to try to do the secretarial work as well as drafting and answering the phone. The secretary could also do a certain amount of drafting.

Larry was only there about a year. And I think Rockrise and Milono about a year. After that there were still the five of us. The last two or three years there were a few other younger fellows who were hired.

Riess: When Halprin was there, how did he work with Mr. Church?

Stafford: Well, I wasn't exposed to them long enough--Larry was just out of the service too, and he must have been there about a year my last year in school. He and Mr. Church understood each other and got along very well. They had a great rapport. But it was pretty obvious that Larry had some definite ideas of his own, philosophies of design, which was great. I think they both learned from each other.

Riess: Was a partnership contemplated?

Stafford: No, although they operated almost as partners, I think. Later on June and Casey and I were called associates, and after five, six, seven years of experience there we all began to be pretty reliable people, I think. Tommy would go away for a couple of months and leave us alone; we'd carry on the operation of the office.

Riess: Would a job come in directly to you?

Stafford: Sometimes, although we were usually so busy that we never had time to take on a new job without him knowing about it. Once in a while we'd contact him and ask him if it was all right. We usually didn't do much in the way of final drawings until he had a chance to look at it.

Riess: How long were you with him?

Stafford: Fifteen years.

Riess: When did you leave?

Stafford: In 1965, January.

Riess: Why?

Stafford: I felt a need to stop tearing around the Bay Area so much, and to have my own office.

Riess: Did he replace you?

Stafford: Oh yes, he had, up to five years ago, the same number of people, five.

Riess: Did Casey Kawamoto stay?

Stafford: No, Casey left before I did. He opened up his own office a year or two before I did.

Jerry Henderson was hired, I think, when Casey left. And then Walt Guthrie was there for about a year when I was there. Then there were several other people in the office that I didn't know.

Riess: When you were through school, did you give any thought to the other offices around?

Stafford: No, I was so happy to be able to get out of school and go to Mr. Church's office.

Riess: Would the other offices--Osmundson's for instance--have been alien to what you thought about landscape architecture?

Stafford: Not really alien. But for me Mr. Church's philosophy and way of doing things was just right. I probably would not have enjoyed the profession nearly as much had I gone in with another office, particularly Royston's--whom I admire quite a lot--and I guess that

Stafford: is because I didn't understand him. And yet some of my classmates went with him and have been there for years. I doubt if I'd been as happy working for Larry Halprin. It's hard to explain. I spent so much time in the field [working for the Church office] and that's the thing I really enjoy still today. And so it was the most wonderful thing that could have happened, you see.

Riess: The picture of him designing a couple of gardens over the weekend--and I've heard he worked a 16-hour day--could he not say "no" to anything?

Stafford: Well, I think it was hard for him to say "no" to some people, and other times he did say "no." But he was the kind of a guy that just had to do it. He'd work nights and weekends and holidays. He moved very rapidly. He had the ability to analyze a problem right away quick and come to a solution, so he did an amazing amount of work in a short period of time.

But on top of that he was doing a book, and traveling, and the social life. I don't know how he did it.

Riess: The social life? Is there a lot of that?

Stafford: Well, with his family in San Francisco, yes.

Riess: I understand that he did have remarkably good client relationships.

Stafford: Right, that was one of the unusual things about both Mr. and Mrs. Church. They liked people and they met people very well, and people liked them. They made a great number of friends, all over the country, and people were sincere about being friendly with them, and they realized that, so it was a rewarding experience.

Riess: Did Mrs. Church travel with Tommy?

Stafford: Yes, especially on the eastern trips. And it was a good thing, I think they both enjoyed it and it gave them time to be together. Because around here their time was quite limited.

I was amazed at his ability to take off for Fort Worth, Texas, on a weekend and meet a client, sit down and analyze the problem, and make sketches and studies and solve all their problems and know what plant materials would work in that locality, and then hop on the plane and be back in the office on Monday morning, having done a new garden over the weekend in a strange place. I used to go with him once in a while on those trips and I'd be exhausted by the time I got home.

Riess: It's hard to reconcile that high level of energy with the easy-going nice quality that he has.

Stafford: Well, he always had that easy-going quality. Once in a while he'd get nervous if somebody was obviously going to wreck his schedule. Sometimes he'd be on schedules--he'd sit down and make out his own airline schedule for a trip in the Mid-West where he'd be gone for ten days and was going to see a half a dozen people, and if somebody wasn't cooperating, one of his clients, and he was going to miss a plane, he would be upset. Other than that, he just loved to do that kind of thing, and he'd be all over the country.

Riess: What did he do on the plane between clients?

Stafford: Oh, reading, sometimes sleeping, or making notes about what was said, so that somebody in the office, when he got back, could follow up and take over the drafting. Or many times it was a report to the architect on what he'd said and thought. All kinds of things. He kept busy, always had a tablet in his briefcase, always doing something.

Riess: Was it a relief to have him gone from the office, the pressure off?

Stafford: Oh, yes, many times it was good for him to get away from the office because we could get a lot of work done that was piling up. I can remember times when I'd have five projects to do the working drawings on piled up on my reference table.

Riess: So, so long as he was in the jobs would be piling up?

Stafford: Either that or I'd be out in the field with him and wouldn't be able to get much work done. Or people coming and you'd have to drop things to talk to them. And long coffee hours. Birthday celebrations. And lots of interesting people in and out all the time--artists, photographers and friends and clients.

Riess: Why were artists coming and going?

Stafford: Just friends of his, and friends of Betsy's, and June's. Or architects or people from out of town dropping in to see him or to say hello. He had so many friends in the design field plus all his clients that there was always something going on, it seemed like. So with that kind of a situation, many times it was a relief when he was away; it gave us a little more time to get our work down.

Riess: It's surprising he would give that much time to the visitors.

Stafford: Well, quite often it was pre-arranged. People would call and arrange a date or time. And the convenient thing would be the coffee hour at ten. Sometimes they'd arrive with five or six people and a great

Stafford: big tray of donuts and they'd be there until 11:30. It was always so enjoyable, and so many interesting people, I used to have to pull myself away and get to work. The phone would be ringing and things would be going on, and all in a relatively small office space.

Riess: I'm interested in what people keep around them? Did Mr. Church have pictures, or objects, or what around on the desk?

Stafford: Hm, nothing comes to mind. I know he always had a bottle of bourbon in the bottom drawer and a carton of cigarettes in the second drawer. A bunch of pills in his briefcase. He did have some interesting things on his desk and I can't remember what they were now. It seems to me there were some small sculpture items of some sort that he always had, a paper-weight type thing. And he loved flowers. The girls always used to bring bouquets in the spring, that type of thing.

Riess: Did client conferences take place in the office?

Stafford: Quite often, but he spent a lot of time visiting the clients at their home, too, and a lot of time on the site.

Riess: I'd like to go back again to when Rockrise and Milono were in the office. Why did that stop?

Stafford: Well, I think it was beginning to be just too much work for Mr. Church and probably he wasn't making any money at it.

Riess: What was the financial setup? Was it profit-sharing?

Stafford: Well, the associates usually, as I remember, every year shared in a percentage of the profits.

Riess: Otherwise you were on salary.

Stafford: Right. And at the time, as I remember, the salaries were quite adequate compared to what other offices were paying.

Riess: When architects come into offices right after architecture school usually they get terribly badly-paid jobs and it's seen as training for a long period of time.

Stafford: When we started that was true. We started at an hourly rate. But the first three or four raises came along as the result of Mr. Church's desire to give us more money.

Riess: As you became more valuable.

Riess: I have talked to architects who felt that despite all the schooling their training really began in their first job in an office. Does that hold true in landscape architecture?

Stafford: Yes, and it did in my case too. I didn't really know very much but I had a lot of confidence in that I'd had the background from Berkeley plus the field experience--nine months in the field before I went to school and then summers.

3) The Design Process

Riess: How did he tell you what he wanted? If he gave you a sketch and something you did was not right, would he make a note, or was it a verbal communication, or what?

Stafford: He'd make copious notes, sometimes on the working drawings, sometimes on a piece of tracing paper on top of it. Sometimes you'd be working on something on a Friday afternoon and by Monday morning you'd come in and it would all be changed, but that was slightly unusual. As I say, he worked so fast and did so many things all at once that once in a while he'd come back to review them and make changes. But it was usually in the form of drawing or a note.

Riess: I guess he could have an idea, and you could develop the sketch, and with it visualized he could see that it would not work.

Stafford: Yes, the best time to change it is when it is on paper. [Laughter]

Riess: Were wounded egos the result?

Stafford: No, you wouldn't have been able to last if it wounded your ego. After all, it was his design and his office and his way of doing things. Just because you'd finished the working drawings on something and he wanted to change it, sometimes you'd say, "Well, okay, but somebody else is going to have to wait a day or two."

Riess: How about if you had ideas you wanted to incorporate into a drawing?

Stafford: Then you'd do a little overlay study and ask him to look at it and see what he thought. Many times that kind of thing went on because a problem of topography or something else would come up that he hadn't seen or hadn't known about. And then many times the clients would change their minds.

Stafford: Usually he'd send the studies or get together with the clients and review them and they'd think about them, and then they'd meet again. It was an ongoing process of design, sometimes years before something was firm. And then other times something would be firm right away quick and then other times it would all be changed on the site, during construction. So it was an exciting, fast-moving way of life.

Riess: I guess that's why Floyd Gerow, and other contractors who really understood, were essential to the process.

Stafford: Yes. Mr. Church had his own crew of men for many years when he first started out and he loved to work in the field himself and help build gardens and plant and prune. That's an exciting part of it really. I was fortunate that I was able to participate in that for many years, in the field. He had no qualms about coming out to the job and, as Floyd used to say, "throw the planting plan away." Place the plants and tell the fellow where to put them all.

4) Including the Arts, and Working with Architects

Riess: In a 1948 catalog from the San Francisco Museum's Landscape Architecture show there was a comment that landscape architecture should include architecture and painting and sculpture. Was that all just theoretical, or did Mr. Church include the arts deliberately?

Staff: There were some gardens and some projects where the architect and a sculptor and an artist were involved, along with the landscape architect. It actually was rather unusual.

Tommy used to work with Claire [Falkenstein] a lot, and Addie Kent, and they were good friends. And he liked to use sculpture. Painting, not too much, unless maybe a mural got involved. But I don't remember in the design of the gardens him saying, "Well, there's got to be a piece of sculpture just at this particular point." If the client had the money and liked a certain type of sculpture, then it would be incorporated, but it usually was secondary in the overall concept.

Riess: How about color itself? (I think of the Royston garden that looked like a Mondrian painting.) How important was that?

Stafford: Relatively unimportant compared to form and to the overall relationship of the garden to the site. He had a very good color sense, in his choice of plant materials and other materials that he used in a

Stafford: garden. It would be hard to say that his designs related to color more than abstract art or painting.

Riess: Do some landscape architects sketch their designs in color, and others work in black and white? One oriented more toward color than another?

Stafford: Yes, I think so. Particularly Royston used to do that a lot. I don't know about Halprin.

Riess: And Church?

Stafford: Mostly black and white. But excuse me, he did color his presentation drawings. But that was mostly to show that the concrete wasn't green and the plants were, or that the bricks were bricks.

Riess: Another quote from that catalog interested me. In an article by William Wurster, who I know worked with Mr. Church, he seemed to be saying that landscape architects were in danger of taking over too much of the design end of things. Would you say a bit about how Church worked with Wurster and with the other architects you may have seen in contact with him. Did they come to his office, or he to theirs?

Stafford: Both, and they worked back and forth very well together, depending on what the project was. They leaned on Tommy heavily for his site planning abilities and his input on orientation and what might happen to a given project in relation to the site and the existing trees and grading and the overall concept of the structures on the site, that type of thing. As well as details; they used to spend a great deal of time, I remember, talking about textures of the house and the garden, and paving materials and other materials that were to be used, as well as color. Wurster, Ernest Born, Gardner Dailey and others worked very closely together.

I think I can remember that the architects tended to try to control the scene. In other words, I think Wurster's statement is probably true that at times Mr. Church or other landscape architects might have tried to dominate, but with most architects it's pretty hard to do.

It would depend a lot on whose client it was too, to start with. Because sometimes the person would hire the landscape architect before the architect. Then, who's the leader?

Riess: Then we can assume the landscape architect would influence the choice of architect.

Stafford: Oh, yes. Many times. And in the fifties there was a lot of new-- I shouldn't say new, but different--techniques in house design going on. Some of the houses were rather controversial maybe. The new materials that were being used, the flat roofs, the great expanses of glass, were all things that had to be thought out in relation to the total site.

5) The Life-Style Factor

Riess: How much would Church conceive the style of the garden to go with the style of the house?

Stafford: Well, there was a period where I think his gardens were related to the indoor-outdoor sort of living that was being talked about in Sunset and House Beautiful. He adapted his design to make this type of life work for people living in areas where they could be outside in the evening, wanting to barbeque, wanting swimming pools, and all that. So there was a lot done at that period with the requirement by the client that they be able to enjoy the outdoors.

Riess: The indoor-outdoor living was a sign of the times more than it was a Thomas Church conception?

Stafford: Yes. I think people may have been led toward it more by the magazines.

Riess: And don't these same magazines advocate "doing it yourself?"

Stafford: Sure, but I don't think they've taken away business, let's say, from the average office.

But people were getting the concepts of outdoor living from the magazines and other printed media--lots of newspaper articles. I'm not sure who was behind it all, or started it all, but it was an interesting phenomenon, really, Architects were designing houses with lots of glass. You could get out of the important rooms at one or two places, and as long as there was some place to go and something to do, it all worked.

Riess: In one of Mr. Church's books he starts out saying that he has lived through several revolutions in design. Can you recall any movements or changes in what was happening in the office that would constitute a revolution?

Stafford: Well, the main one was the one we were just speaking of, where the average homeowner could have a house and a garden where he could get out and enjoy the garden and live in it. Hopefully it would

Stafford: be a restful, peaceful experience for him. The designs in those days did that, they would allow for that type of use and experience.

Later on Mr. Church's designs began to reflect a more formal or axial solution and yet the houses many times were the same contemporary architecture and the outside use areas were there, but the large expanses of concrete, the curving lines and free-form type design was omitted. He began to go back to the more formal symmetrical, or axial, solutions. And I think that was reflected a lot in some of the large pools that he did.

Riess: What time are you speaking of?

Stafford: The thing I'm talking about probably started happening more in the late fifties. And many of the larger houses then became more axial, and more symmetrical.

Riess: In a larger house--

Stafford: --a different scale is involved, depending on the site again. Certain projects came through where people were building quite large, expensive houses on what you might think of as a medium-sized piece of property. Land was getting scarce and the topography presented more problems.

Riess: Like Woodside--

Stafford: And the Hillsborough area. At one time there was hardly a good lot in Hillsborough to build a house on. All the good properties had been built on.

So all those kinds of things began to dictate more and more the design concepts. You see, at one time many of the acre lots in Atherton and Woodside were available and they were good-sized gentle sloping pieces of property, so the restrictions on the designer were less. And many of the free-flowing solutions to the design were easier there than where you had steep slopes.

Riess: Do you think a lot of the people who buy and build there are after a kind of grandeur that would pre-determine the solutions?

Stafford: Sometimes. I would say that 50 percent of Mr. Church's clients were in the upper-income brackets, at least. Most of them had pretty good ideas of what they'd like to have in the way of a home and a garden.

- Stafford: Many of his clients were very avid gardeners, and those were the kind of people he loved to work for because he could do things that were exciting and enjoyable in the way of planting and design, as against the person who would start out saying, "I don't know a thing about gardening and I don't want to learn. All I want is a good-looking garden with no maintenance." There was a period where so many of the clients said no maintenance, didn't like to garden, wanted a pool.
- Riess: When was that?
- Stafford: Fifties, early sixties.
- Riess: When was the gardening-loving client?
- Stafford: Oh, all along, but proportion-wise there were at one time more of the people who didn't like to garden. And it's kind of interesting; a lot of those people have learned they like to garden and they are now doing other homes and gardens in a different style for a different way of life.
- Riess: Mrs. Church said once that Tommy was often able to "save the day"--mediating between the architect and client. Did you observe that?
- Stafford: Oh, yes, he was excellent at that ability to analyze the problem and come out with a clear solution where other people hadn't. And when he had an idea and he knew it was right and knew it worked he stuck to it and he was able to convince people without upsetting them or making them angry--they usually ended up thinking he was the champ.
- Riess: There are so many options open to someone who decides to built a new house. Wurster, I would think, would make the decisions for the client.
- Stafford: Yes, I think you could say that about Wurster. He was a very good designer and very careful about a house that worked for the client, and he had very strong, definite ideas about how it should look and how it should relate to the site and the surroundings, and yet he worked with Tommy closely on the site work. They [Wurster, Bernardi, & Emmons] at the time probably were one of the better offices in realizing what the site problems were in building a house. They were very careful to make sure it fit.
- Riess: It seems like the obvious thing to do.
- Stafford: These were engineering and aesthetic problems. During the preliminary design of the house the site limitations were very carefully considered.

6) House Beautiful, Photography, Travel

- Riess: Mr. Church was a busy man, yet he took time to write articles for magazines and newspapers. Was that out of a wish to educate the public, or make money, or what?
- Stafford: I would guess it was a combination of those. And the fact that he got along with and liked Liz Gordon so much. She, Elizabeth Gordon, was at that time the garden editor of House Beautiful. She came out here very often and she and Tommy and Betsy became very good friends. I suspect--though there again I'm guessing--that he may not have had as much time as he would have liked to devote to this kind of thing, but because of their friendship she probably urged him onward. And I think it was a good thing business-wise. Plus, there is a certain satisfaction in writing a nice article that explains your philosophy, and having it published in a national magazine. Tommy was very good at explaining his ideas; his ability to express himself verbally, as well as in writing, I always felt was quite unique.
- Riess: Landscape architects aren't as a rule that articulate?
- Stafford: Many of us aren't.
- Riess: Often you don't have to be.
- Stafford: A lot of it has to do with whom you're working, and your background and education.
- Riess: And what do you think the influences on him were? Did he keep up with magazine and journal articles?
- Stafford: I really don't know.
- Riess: What do you think he admired particularly?
- Stafford: I can't recall specific--he used to admire so many things, I can't recall any particular things. He used to relate more to experiences and people, I think, and maybe natural countryside. Although I am sure he probably was enthusiastic about all kinds of things that he saw in his travels. I can't remember them, that's the trouble.
- Riess: He took photogtaphs and slides? Did he share them with the office?
- Stafford: Yes, lots of photographs.

Stafford: He's just recently done some very interesting things, closeups of colors and textures of buildings somewhere in South America.

I know he enjoyed France and Italy. And he always spoke very highly of the Scandinavian countries and the things he had seen there. That was another amazing thing about Mr. Church. At one time he was importing furniture from Scandinavia and was the local dealer for Alvar Aalto's furniture.

Riess: When was that?

Stafford: Possibly 1947 to 1955. I'm not sure. He had printed brochures in showrooms and furniture houses, and shipments went directly to them or to the buyer.

Riess: Why? Was that in lean times?

Stafford: I think it was something to do, and I think he met Aalto on a trip.

Riess: And he encouraged clients to have it?

Stafford: It was in an era where modern furniture was coming into its own.

When I first met him in 1946 he had the same office he's in now. The front third of it was his office. He had a little coal stove and his desk and his drafting board, and one other board for June Meehan--she was the only other person. The rest of the office was vacant. Some sculptor types had been using the back rooms. It was just like an old warehouse.

7) The Evolution of a Garden, and Costs

Riess: What was Mr. Church's approach to a new job and a new site?

Stafford: He would walk around the site and not say anything, just look, and hopefully get the people to talking about what they had in mind and what they'd like to do, what they'd like to spend. As they talked and he looked around, little by little you could almost feel the wheels turning and the ideas evolving, and at one point he'd stop and sit down and tell the clients what he thought and what they couldn't do and shouldn't do, and where their ideas might not fit, and why. It was always a very enlightened discourse on the site, related to the climate and to the sun and to the surrounding areas and the existing trees and vegetation. And that would be the preliminary conference.

Stafford: If they liked his ideas, they'd hire him and he'd start working these things out on paper. And then at some point the house plan and location, the grading, the ideas for garden would become firm. Quite often then there wouldn't be much more done in the way of landscape plans until the house was framed. Then they would review and relook at some of the ideas, possibly make changes. Then the garden plan would be finalized, and built. So, that kind of thing could take from three months to a year, depending on the size of the house, the weather, and what else was happening.

If this first meeting took place on a Thursday, let's say, then the following Saturday afternoon he might conceivably spend roughing out a preliminary which would be printed and shown to the client. Later then, there were drawings that we might need for grading or for the architect's information, one of the associates might do that drawing, and later on another final design plan might be evolved. And often that would be a drawing that one of the staff would take and firm up, make sure the grades worked, etc., another step in the process of getting more detailed. And at that time it would be good to make the cost estimates.

Riess: When were the actual plants named?

Stafford: Usually the major trees and shrubs would be named on the preliminary drawing. The smaller things would come later.

Then at the working drawing stage one of us would take over and do those drawings based on the final preliminaries. Those were usually three, four, or five sheets of drawings, and the layout for the grading, irrigation systems, structural details, and the planting plans. Many times the planting plans weren't finalized until the construction phase was over. Then another conference to re-review the planting!

It's very difficult to sit down and in a short period of time make all the decisions that you need to make involved in building a house and a good-sized garden all at once. People don't have that much time to be together, for one thing, at any given time. And so you end up doing it in stages. The more ideas and concepts you can get initially, the better it is for the designer.

It seemed like it was always spaced out in different phases, though once in a while there would be a meeting and a concept evolved and the exact plants described and that would be it. The thing would just be done like that. Though that was more likely to be a project where you just were designing a swimming pool, for instance, and there was only one place to put it, and everybody agreed on how big it should be, and what should be around it!

Riess: Once the garden construction was done, could it have been a pleasant area even without plants?

Stafford: It could have. Many of his gardens were designed where planting was secondary to anything.

Riess: It didn't need the plants to work.

Stafford: Right. And that was one of the ideas, or concepts, being evolved at one time, that you did it without planting. People used to call landscape architects "pansy-planters." Even today some people just don't realize that the structures, walls, and fences, the man-made things, are equally important in the situation as plant materials.

Riess: More so, in a Church garden?

Stafford: Yes. But on the other hand Tommy had a great knowledge and love of plant materials and did beautiful gardens where plant materials were the dominant theme and the value of the plants and trees on or near the site was recognized.

Riess: A next stage was getting the bids from the contractor?

Stafford: Tommy used two or sometimes three contractors that he knew and relied on and that understood him and that he knew were honest and did the work properly. They would receive the drawings and come back with a price to build what was on the drawings and if it was within the client's budget the contracted job could go ahead.

Riess: Did he send the plans to several of them, to get competitive bids?

Staff: Sometimes it would be that way, other times no. Depended on the project, where it was, whether the client insisted on competitive bids or was willing to work with just one person.

Riess: How and when were fees worked out?

Stafford: The fee was worked out right at first so that the client would know what costs he was getting into.

Riess: Would there be a consultation fee?

Stafford: Usually not. For residential work they'd call him and he'd come down and look at the site, or they'd meet somewhere, and see what was involved, and then talk about ideas, ways of doing it, suggestions, sometimes sketches--

Riess: But no charge for that meeting?

Stafford: Usually for that first meeting there wasn't. And then if people said, "Well, we'd like to have you do it," then he'd quote them a fee and write them a letter and he'd either be hired or not.

Riess: Then he had to worry about the contracting?

Stafford: No, this would be just the design fee. Later on, once more drawings were evolved, we'd make estimates for the estimated cost of construction of the garden and review those with the people and if they felt it was within their budget then we'd get firm bids from contractors. Usually it worked out; quite often they'd have to chop things down to get into the budget.

Riess: Where would the corners be cut?

Stafford: It's hard to say. Each job varied quite a bit. Usually in the type of material you'd use, the major paving materials, or any wall materials. Sometimes a whole new design would evolve because of costs. A lot of gardens were done in stages, too, because of budget problems. Part would be built one year, part five years later.

Riess: I have read that he likes to give people completed looking gardens.

Stafford: Well, also sometimes it was more the quantity of plant materials, rather than the size. There was a tendency for a while to over-plant gardens.

Riess: On the part of everybody, or on the part of the Church office?

Stafford: On the part of the designers and on the part of the clients. They wanted an immediate effect. Lots of times the end result was plants being put in too close together. So you had a really good effect within two or three years, but then around ten years later you had to start taking things out.

Riess: Did Church have any ways of getting around this?

Stafford: It was a problem, still is. Tommy felt proper and timely pruning was the best answer.

8) Master Planning

Riess: What major projects was he working on when you were there?

Stafford: When I first started we were doing smaller projects at Stanford, and then later he started doing master planning for both the Berkeley and Stanford campuses. And later the master plan for U.C. Santa Cruz.

Riess: He must have had to take time away from his clients. Do you think he liked the large projects?

Stafford: Oh, yes. And he took quite a bit of time off when he wrote his book. But we were all busy doing things at the time. There again it was his ability to get great quantities of work done.

No, I think he enjoyed doing the master planning for Berkeley and Stanford as much as anything I've seen him do. The master plan that he evolved for Stanford is quite a beautiful plan, as such.

Riess: It hasn't become reality?

Stafford: Not all of it. Same with Berkeley.

At Berkeley he did a magnificent job of getting them to clean out certain areas, especially along the creek, and cut their maintenance down so that what maintenance they were doing was worthwhile. And many very nice areas were opened up and made useable and visible as a result of a very thorough going-over of the whole campus. Taking out things that were overgrown, or in the wrong place, or not well cared for.

Riess: Did he bring the office along?

Stafford: We used to go out with him a lot. Later on we were so busy we didn't have time to go with him. Whenever possible he would take one of us along, especially if he knew we might be the one that would be working on that project. That way the associate that might be handling that job would meet the client and see the site.

9) Pruning and Writing

Riess: Once the garden is built, it's all potential, and yet it's out of your hands.

Stafford: Well, he revisited a client frequently. After the garden was installed, many times he would drop by, unannounced, just walk around, prune a tree, ring the bell and tell the client they ought to be watering something, or why don't they add something here?

Quite often if we were on a trip on the Peninsula, for instance, we would just drop into some garden maybe five years old and just look around and see what it looked like. Sometimes people would invite him for lunch, say, "When are you going to be down next? Can you come for lunch? I'd like to see you, and I have a little question, and I'll give you lunch." He was very fond of that association, particularly in the spring, when things were blooming.

He tended to keep his eye on things as much as possible. After a while there got to be so many gardens he couldn't possibly go to all of them, but his favorite clients and his favorite gardens he would visit often.

Riess: Did he have any favorite gardeners?

Stafford: Yes, especially in the city, a man named Alec Cattini. It would be nice if you could meet him.

Riess: Does he work on his own, or does he have a business?

Stafford: He's retired now, but at the time he worked by himself, did gardening and some garden construction for Tommy. When they had a particularly tough project and needed help, many times I'd be sent out to help Alec.

Riess: Digging?

Stafford: Digging, and pruning, and planting, and moving soil in buckets to third-story gardens, all kinds of things!

Down here Floyd [Gerow] was the landscape contractor that he leaned on the most.

Tommy knew a lot of the old gardeners that people had on their estates or property for years, and always got along very well with those kind of people.

Stafford: Of course one of his greatest assets is that he could get the workmen and the people who were taking care of things enthused about what they were doing, and also enthused and interested in his ideas. I found it a very difficult thing for me to do when I first started in my office, but Tommy, in just a few minutes, could be over talking to the workmen and getting them enthused to do something the way he wanted it done, but in a way where they were excited and perhaps they thought it was their idea.

He had that quality about him; I think he was that way with almost everybody, but particularly with the workmen. He was their friend. They all got along great, and it made a difference, too. People would tend to plant things properly and take pride in their work. And he always knew pretty much what he was talking about, so that he could explain to them, and tell them why, and show people in the field how to do it and why it was done a certain way.

When I started out there was no labor force. Most of the young men were still in the service and those that were getting out weren't thinking about digging ditches or planting plants. They were all headed to business school or engineering, so there was a shortage of people willing to get their hands dirty working in the ground.

Riess: "Jack Stafford has shouldered the task of holding our practice together in one of our busiest years." That was 1955. What is implied there?

Stafford: Who made that quote?

Riess: That was in Mr. Church's book.

Stafford: Well, I think that was because he had had to take a certain amount of time off to write the book and so I was able to do 90 percent of the field work supervision, and I think that's what that was about.

Riess: Did he deliberately take himself out of the field to write the book? A kind of enforced sabbatical?

Stafford: Yes, it took a lot of time, a lot of hours, getting it together.

Riess: Did he get all the quotations and stuff together, or did he have somebody doing research?

Stafford: The secretary and June Meehan both did a lot of research for him, the secretary particularly. She was very good at it. But then once the thing got moving he had to spend eight hours a day on it, you know, for several months.

Riess: But it was really a compilation of stuff he had written.

Stafford: Oh, yes, he had files and files of things he was planning to use, but his ideas of how to put it all together weren't gelled. Then Casey did a lot of the drawings that went into the book.

It's hard to know how much work is involved unless you've done it. I remember it took a long time. And the publishers' ideas on how to get it all together influenced him, I think, and he had to redo certain things that he had started on.

Riess: "A Thomas Church garden," is almost a by-word, not that everyone can afford one, by any means.

Stafford: Yes, except a lot of the designers that are in practice now are using some of the concepts and ideas that Tommy evolved in the early fifties; they've also thrown out some of the things too.

Riess: Are you now doing the kind of work that his office was doing?

Stafford: Pretty much, yes. I find I've changed my thoughts on ways of doing some things. I don't have the same clientele Tommy had, and although I have some of the wealthy people, my practice is not nearly as large as his.

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Lou Schenone

A NURSERYMAN VIEWS THE LANDSCAPING BUSINESS AND
HOW CHURCH USED PLANTS

Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

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Lou Schenone
February 23, 1976
Interview held at Pacific Nurseries, Colma

1) Pacific Nurseries: History. A View of Trends

Schenone: The Pacific Nurseries were started in 1869 by a fellow by the name of Ludemann. The nursery was at Chestnut & Baker--Baker Street between Lombard and Chestnut Street--in San Francisco. Shortly thereafter the growing grounds for the fruit trees and roses and things of that nature were at Millbrae where the Green Hills Golf and Country Club is now. There is still a road that leads up from El Camino Real, called Ludemann Lane, that leads up to the golf course.

Mr. von Kempf purchased Pacific Nurseries about 1909 or 1910 and he had worked for Ludemann in San Francisco. He purchased the nursery and then he purchased the property here in Colma, moved the nursery, including the greenhouses, to Colma, and it's been here ever since. So the nursery is 107 years old at the present time.

Riess: Is that the story of the nursery you have there?

Schenone: No, this is an old catalog. I got it because I didn't know what Ludemann's first name was. F. Ludemann, but I don't know what the F. stands for.

Riess: Do you suppose he supplied McLaren?

Schenone: He supplied many, many cities, municipalities, gardeners, estates, even the state with plant material.

Henry von Kempf developed Pacific Nurseries as a retail and wholesale business here in Colma. Then in 1947 his son Paul von Kempf purchased the nursery--formed a corporation and purchased the nursery. After his father died he purchased, from his mother and his sister, the balance of the business and was the sole owner.

Schenone: In 1976, this year, I purchased it, with two old-time friends, and I am now the president of Pacific Nurseries and Paul von Kempf is not associated with us anymore. It is out of the von Kempf family. My two sons are with me here, and the old crew and so on.

Riess: Do you have plans for major changes?

Schenone: No, not major changes, but expansion. I think Pacific Nurseries has been noted for many, many years for its quality and service.

I have been here for 25 years and for the last 12 or 15 years I have had the first right of refusal to purchase the nursery in case it was ever sold.

Riess: When I talked to Jack Stafford this morning he said that when he got out of the army he thought he might like to be in the nursery business so he went around and talked to some nurserymen and he said that they didn't encourage him. Actually it made me wonder how much landscape planning nurserymen were doing 25 years ago.

Schenone: I started in 1935 and we didn't know what a landscape architect was at that time. Obviously there were some around, but not too many. There were mostly gardeners and some nurserymen who would landscape a home, not design it necessarily, but somebody would call up the nursery and say, "I have a new house. Will you come out and landscape it for me?"

Riess: Did you refer it to someone else?

Schenone: No, what we did then was just send someone out to take a look at it. Then he would come back in and load the truck with a bunch of plants and trees and take them out and plant them. In fact I recall in 1938, 1939, that era of San Francisco, people would call up from the Avenues and of course those were adjoining houses, and you'd know exactly what their house looked like, so you didn't have to go out there and look. You'd say, well, we got a call from a certain number on Geary Street. Okay, so you loaded up with a couple of Irish yews, a couple of Escallonias, plants that you knew would thrive out there and that people wanted, put them on the truck, went out, and just planted them.

Riess: Nobody wanted to look that different from their neighbor, I guess.

Schenone: This is it. That's why a lot of the houses at that time all looked alike. They still look alike and I would imagine the same Irish yews, the same plants are there.

Schenone: And Ingleside, during the thirties, the Spanish influence was established out there, so you had a lot of things that were related to the Mexican or Spanish. Dracaena palms and phorniums and things of that nature. It's changed since that time. But the industry goes in stages. We had the Spanish influence during the thirties, especially in San Francisco and in the lower San Mateo area.

Then right after World War II as you recall we got the Japanese influence because our guys had been over in Japan and they liked what they saw and so we got into the Japanese situation with the bonsais. And everything had to be a little bit crooked--"plants with character" rather than the symmetry that we had known.

After that people started thinking that the gardens of Europe were not that bad, they were pretty good, so then we started back into the use of more symmetrical type plants--boxwoods. Boxwood hedges became the vogue.

Riess: Are you still thinking of the do-it-yourself gardener? Or were landscape architects moving in these stages?

2) Thomas Church: Above the Trends

Schenone: Landscape architects were influenced. I think the only person who was never influenced by the Japanese gardens or the trends was Tommy. He had his style and regardless of what happened he just went along his own way and used boxwood hedges. He used them back in the late thirties and early forties and he still uses them today. I think he probably was one of the instigators of the curves in walks and terraces and things of that nature.

He had a style, and modes and things like that didn't change his thinking. I doubt very much if he ever did a Japanese garden, or even tried to attempt it. I don't know.

Riess: But do the landscape architects do these things because their clients see pictures of them in magazines and demand them?

Schenone: Well, I think in Tommy's case they called him because they wanted him to tell them what they should do. They didn't say, "Look, Tommy, I want a Japanese garden." Or "I want a garden as they have on the Italian Riviera." Or Tivoli Gardens on a small scale. I think they just relied on him to look at the situation and say, "We'll do this," or that, and "I'll design the garden for you." But I think he was very aware of what people thought.

3) Bringing the Clients to the Plants

Schenone: Tommy was the only landscape architect that I know of who would take his clients in here and say, "I'm going to show you plant materials," and then he would start to listen and he would start to say, "Well, do you like this?" And if they didn't like it, Bingo, would move on to something else until he found something that they really liked, and then he would incorporate this into the plan.

Riess: The others don't work that way?

Schenone: Most landscape architects that I know, and I've known a lot of them, would visit the site and then go back to the office and design and say, "We'll have a maple tree here," and so on. But I think Tommy was a little different. He would get the plot plan, the layout, and he would design the paths, patios, pool if there was a pool, lanais, loggias, whatever, arbor, but when it came to the selection of plant materials, he left it sort of blank.

He would come in here with the client, open up the plans, walk around, and look at materials with the clients. They'd say, "Gee, Tommy, I like this," and he would find a place for it.

Riess: Then you might say that the plant materials weren't all that important to him.

Schenone: Well, only as far as his client was concerned. If he would say, "We're going to have a flowering plum over here," and his client said, "Gee, I don't like flowering plum because my neighbors have it"--and all of this. Then he would say, "Fine, we have other choices, we have flowering cherry, flowering crabapple." Didn't mean that much to him as to whether it was a flowering plum, or whichever. It meant he gave them a choice of a flowering tree, and he allowed them to select the kind of a flowering tree that they liked because after all they were the ones who were going to have to look at it all those years.

He knew plant materials. In fact I think Tommy would have been a tremendous nurseryman. I think he would have been a great nurseryman and I think this was really his first love. He loved to fool with plants, even in his own garden. He had a place in Santa Cruz. I've never been up there but he used to talk to me about it and he would stop in occasionally and pick up some material that he was going to take up to Santa Cruz. He thought the world of this; he just loved to get out and garden. He liked to tinker with plants. He had the pair of shears hanging on his belt all the time.

4) Spotting Good Value.

Schenone: There were plants that I would throw away--he would make something out of them.

Riess: Yes, that's a special love of plants.

Schenone: That's right. I recall oh, 15, 18 years ago he stopped in at a nursery in Palo Alto and saw some plants there that I guess he thought he could do something with. So he called me and asked me if I would buy them for him from this fellow, go down there and pick them up. They were an Eleagnus. So I said fine, I'd do it.

One day--I live in San Carlos--I was down there and I asked the--the nursery isn't there anymore incidentally--I asked them about these Eleagnus [Eleagnus pungens] that Tommy Church had looked at.

So he showed them to me and when I looked at them I said, "No, these can't be it." I would have thrown them away. They were overgrown, big, scraggly, but Tommy just looked at them and I think he figured he could do something with them.

Well, I didn't buy them. I just picked up the phone and I called Tommy and I said, "Tommy, I'm down here. And are we talking about the same plants?" He said, "Yes."

Well, the guy knew that Tommy wanted them. They were plants that I would have sold at the regular 5 gallon price, but this guy hiked it up about six times. That's why I called Tommy too. I said, "Tommy, do you realize how much these are?"

And he said, "Oh, my God," but "Get them, because I think I have the spot for them."

So I got them but I didn't have the heart to put any more on it; I just sold them for what it cost me because they were so expensive.

But he had a hell of a memory. Three or four years later he said, "Remember those Eleagnus that you said you would throw away, you should see them now." He pruned them, worked with them, made a great plant out of them.

He had a tremendous eye for value. He'd come in and we would have trees that were in big boxes and worth \$300. We'd have the same tree in a smaller box that was worth \$125. We'd have the same

Schenone: tree in a 15-gallon container, worth \$25. And he would look at them and say, "Don't you think this is the best value?"

And of course to me the 15-gallon can is still the best buy in the nursery business, because it's an established plant and it has maturity to it, and in a couple of years it is worth the \$125. That's good interest on your money.

He was looking at value. If it took one year to go from the 24" to the 30" box, that's \$100 difference. So he'd buy the smaller one.

Riess: But he didn't have to do that for his clients.

Schenone: Well, he did. He appreciated value. Many times he would look at something that was big, like a big evergreen elm, and it was \$250 and I'd say, I've got some "24s" that are almost as nice for \$125. Well, he was very appreciative. He'd say, "Let's get these."

So he wasn't trying to sell his clients--and most of his clients were affluent and could afford it--but he wasn't trying to sell his clients the big stuff just to make money on them. He was trying to give them value.

Riess: How could he follow through that much on every job? Do you think that was unusual?

Schenone: Well, of course I don't know how his fees ranged, but if he came here with a client he charged them the time that he spent here.

Riess: And when he was picking out plants for them.

Schenone: Oh, sure. Many cases although he charged them for the time he was down here he would say, "I could be back in the office making \$100 an hour at the drafting table rather than being back here." But he just loved to come into the nursery.

He would park his car out there and he would take about a five-minute walk and then come in and say, "You've got some new stuff in," or "Gee, you're sort of low." He could remember seeing things. He had a tremendous memory for plant material. He would call on the phone and say, "Last time I was down there I saw an evergreen elm in a 24 inch box out in the back. Do you still have it?"

He didn't take notes, but he had an eye and a mind for plant material. Sometimes he would tell me I had something I didn't even know I had myself. He'd say, "Yeah, you have one way out in the back there and it's behind such and such a tree." [Laughter] "Tag it. I want it."

Riess: What's the other extreme in working with landscape architects? That they wouldn't come out at all?

Schenone: We are, or have been, in a very favorable position with landscape architects, in as much as they would specify plant materials on a job and then it would go out to bid to various landscape contractors and if the landscape architects knew the plant materials were from here they wouldn't come down and inspect. I'm talking now about the landscape architects of Tommy's era. Nowadays--

Riess: You're thinking of Eckbo--?

Schenone: Eckbo, Halprin. Jean Walton would come down. But in most cases they wouldn't come down. They would just call and say do you have this, do you have that? And then specify it on their plant lists and we would supply it to the landscape contractors. But Tommy was one of the few people who generally came down because he liked to come down and select the plant material.

In fact it got to a point that at one time we supplied for him special SOLD tags with his name on it because he used to go around tagging material. So this had printed on it Thomas D. Church and Associates. Many times other landscape architects would come in and say, "My God, all I see is Tommy Church's name all over!"

5) The Nurseryman's Guarantee. Experience, Training

Riess: Do you ever have to go out to the country some place and dig out full-grown trees for a job?

Schenone: Many times we have to supplement our own stock by going out and purchasing material from another nursery or whoever has the material that we want.

Riess: Do you buy a tree ever right out of a farmer's field?

Schenone: No, we don't do that. But there are tree movers that we will contact to do that for us. But we try to sell material that is in containers because we know that the minute it's in the ground it's going to start growing immediately. So much of the material that is dug out of the ground and transported 100 miles and then put in the ground has a set-back of it and it may take a year before it grows again. They can be good plants, but we prefer to keep all our material in a boxed situation.

Riess: What kind of a guarantee do you offer?

Schenone: It depends. If we deal with people that we know, landscape contractors--not the public, we don't sell retail--if we sell plant material to a landscape contractor that we do a lot of business with, if one plant dies, there's no question, we'll give him another one. We don't even argue about it, as to why it died. But if we sell plant material to a landscape contractor who installs the material and is not responsible for the maintenance--the client maintains it himself--then we question the kind of maintenance it has received.

All of our material is in boxes or containers, and in order to get it into a 24 or 30 inch box obviously it has to be four or five years old and it has been growing well, is in good condition when we deliver it so all of a sudden if in three months it dies, then something is wrong. Either somebody forgot to water it or overwatered it or the drainage was poor--

In all of the years that I did business with Church and the landscape contractors, I don't ever recall replacing plant material, I really don't, and I think simply because he was a nurseryman at heart and he specified the kinds of material that he knew would do well in the areas in which he was working.

He also did an excellent job of soil preparation. He knew soils. He knew whether they should have drainage and so on. And usually he got enough money from a client to do a good job of soil preparation, so he didn't have that many problems. Occasionally there would be something, but I can't recall any major problems--only if there were a deer situation. [Laughter] And I think he became very aware of that after awhile. He knew the nursery business which is what made him a great landscape architect and not only because of his design work but because of his use of the right kind of plant materials.

We have so many people who decide they would like to use a maple because it has the right kind of character, but if it's not going to tolerate the climatic conditions and so on you can't use it. But they'll use it. "I want it there." And you can't argue them out of it.

Riess: You don't talk them out of things? That's not your role?

Schenone: Oh yes, it is. We--well, if I see something on the list for an area such as the coastal area here, or areas where the frost might be heavy, and they have things on the list that could conceivably freeze

Schenone: or would be damaged by wind conditions, on the coast, we would call the landscape architect and caution him about it. In most cases they will say, "I'm glad you called," and change it. But a lot of times they will say, "No, it's on the plan. I'm not going to change it."

Well, we've done our job. Because we know the area, we're the growers, and the least we can do is mention it to them, that these things won't work, and most of them are very thankful, very appreciative.

Riess: To go back 25 years, what was your training when you came into the business?

Schenone: Well, 1935, during the Depression, I went to work for Avensino-Mortensen, who were the largest wholesale florists--they still have an operation in Mt. Eden. But I worked right here in San Bruno, they had a big operation there. I went to work in the propagating houses, did propagation work for them, and after about two years was the grower of their gardenias and begonias and ran the propagating house.

Riess: Did you just learn it on the job?

Schenone: Yes, except for botany in school, that's about all. Then after that I went into landscaping for a landscape contractor, who also had a nursery, but that didn't last too long because I just couldn't see myself digging six by six holes in solid rock with a pick because I did know the nursery business, I mean I knew how to grow plants and so on. So I went to work for Christensen Nursery, at that time at West Portal Avenue in San Francisco. That's where I met Tommy.

I went into the service for four years and came back and went to work at their Belmont office--they had seven acres there--and did quite a lot of work with Tommy there. Then in 1950 I came here.

Riess: When you had your first contact with Tommy he was just learning too, wasn't he?

Schenone: From what I understand--I didn't know him then--he had been with the West Coast Nurseries in Palo Alto, which is now the Tree Farm in Palo Alto.

Riess: With them how?

Schenone: I don't know, as a nurseryman, salesman, and I think he did a little design work, as I recall.

Then he got his office in San Francisco and I think that was probably in 1932 or 1933.

6) Tommy: Unchanged, Unpretentious

Riess: Has he changed much over the years?

Schenone: Tommy? No.

Riess: He's certainly gotten to be big time.

Schenone: I can't think of anybody that has changed less than Church. He wore khaki pants; I remember in 1947 in Belmont he came in with khaki pants with his pruning shears, and with Jack Stafford, who was this young kid then, walking around with the same clipboard that he always carried, and he'd look at material, tag it, for this job or that job. But he always asked, "Don't you think..." that this or that would look good, always would get other peoples' opinions. He wasn't the kind of guy who said, "I want that in that spot." He would ask peoples' opinions.

I think the people that he had in his office--and he had some great people, like Jack Stafford and June Meehan--but he was the guy that went out and looked for plant materials.

And he just had a feeling for people, I think, and he wanted to be involved. Down here with his boots or pouring concrete, to make sure that it was done the way he wanted it to be done. I don't think he had a field man. Most landscape architects nowadays hire a field representative. The field man supervises and selects and the landscape architect would sit behind his desk in a suit and tie. But Tommy would select his own material and I'm sure that he would go out with Jack and do the surveying. He was a great field man, really.

Riess: He obviously knew how to do a lot of things that landscape architects now don't even know how to do.

Schenone: Either they don't know how to do or won't do. Some people feel that their time is so valuable that they can't afford to do it.

I don't know what kind of fees Tommy charged for the hours that he spent, but I know that I've had people tell me that they could hire him as a consultant for two hours and pay him for those two hours, and get more out of him in those two hours than if they would hire somebody for a whole week and pay fabulous fees.

I recall a doctor, I met him in Hillsborough one time, and he told me that he had people come in--to remodel his garden--and he got estimates that were just out of this world. All he wanted was an idea. "What shall I do?"

Schenone: I said, "Why don't you call Church?"

Well he knew of Church of course, and so he did. (I think it was \$75 an hour.) And in five minutes the fellow told Tommy what he wanted to do, and Tommy set out a little thing, sort of sketched it out very roughly. He gave him the ideas in two hours and this doctor got a building contractor and did it. He changed the whole concept of this guy's garden and his house, changed the entrance to his house, the whole thing. This guy was so pleased!

Tommy had an eye for this sort of thing and this is what made him great. He could walk into a place and immediately say, "We've got to get rid of all of this, and do this." One of the best examples of this is this friend of his, Floyd Gerow, Outdoor Construction, what he [Tommy] did with his house. It was nothing before. And of course Floyd was a landscape contractor, so he could afford to do it. But even so, anybody could do it, or have it done. It wasn't that much of a cost.

[Interruption. Resume talking about Tommy Church's 70th Birthday Party.]

Schenone: With all the people there, people that he saw once a week, or very often, he still found a lot of time for people he didn't see, didn't know very well. He didn't know my wife very well--he knew me, of course--but he came over and made a point of standing with us and talking with us and introducing us, mentioning who we were, and so on. My wife was very impressed with him; she thought, "This is a great guy." Just a beautiful guy. He would leave you for a while, and then always come back, and have something nice to say, and he would stay, you know, for two or three minutes, before somebody else came in and wished him a happy birthday, and so on. He made sure that the people that weren't that well known in the circle of landscape architect and architect friends that he had, that they were taken care of.

Riess: I know he had great rapport with his clients. Other landscape architects point that out, as if it is not easy to reach the end of a job on friendly terms.

Schenone: And the clients would also come back to him even if they needed just one tree. Nobody was going to touch their garden unless he came down and picked the specific tree for them. He came down here many times just to pick out one tree, or to do one little spot in the garden--which I'm sure the gardener could have done. They could have picked up the phone and said, "Tommy, this lady wants some low bushes around this pittosporum out in the back yard." They

Schenone: wouldn't have anything of that; they wanted him to come down to the nursery, and I'm sure they paid for his time. But they wanted to make sure it was his decision, his choice. I think this is great.

So many people would call also and say, "Tommy recommended this particular tree. Would you send it down and charge Mr. Church for it." (We always bill him of course. We would sell it to him at a price. Whatever happened after that, I don't know, about charges.) But in any case, the clients weren't going to touch his garden without telling him what they were doing.

Riess: "His garden."

Schenone: You're darn right. And I think you hear this all the time in the Hillsborough, Burlingame area. These are Tommy Church Gardens.

Riess: What kinds of plants did Tommy like particularly? How about the exotics?

Schenone: Well, none of the exotics. I don't recall his using hibiscus or tropical plants. Most of his were tailored-type plants. Boxwood, trimmed boxwood. Hollywood junipers. Evergreen elms. You always knew a Tommy Church plan by the material that was used. Lots of camellias. Mugho pines.

He traveled a lot in Europe, and I think a lot of his work is a reflection of what he saw in Europe. He was a great admirer of the gardens of Italy. When you are in Italy, you can see where some of the designs have rubbed off on Tommy. You can see a lot of Rome and Florence in his books. And I don't say that he copied anything over there, he wouldn't, but I think he got ideas. And that's why I don't think that he could ever do a Japanese garden or a tropical garden because he just didn't believe in them. Tropical gardens are very difficult to maintain, to keep neat and tidy, and Tommy's jobs are all that way. Neat, tidy, and restful.

Riess: What you mean by a tailored plant is a plant whose habit of growth is--

Schenone: Compact. Some maintenance, but not that much. Many people think of a formal garden sometimes as very difficult to maintain, but it's not, as long as you keep at it. It's the jungly-type tropical gardens that are difficult. Most of the material is so fast-growing, you try to keep it in bounds, unless you have acres and acres and want a jungle. Most people don't. But there's a certain quality to a formal garden that lends to value and prestige. Most Hillsborough homes that were built in the twenties and thirties are formal.

Riess: Before I depart today, I wonder if you have any other comments about Mr. Church.

Schenone: He was a very unpretentious guy, khaki pants, soiled boots.

He took a very personal interest in everything he did and he was well aware of his clients and his clients' needs, and this I think is a good trait, that he was aware of their needs and he satisfied them. There's really nothing more that you can say about the guy. There's nobody I admire more in this field.

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Robert Glasner

A LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR DESCRIBES HIS ROLE IN WORKING WITH CHURCH

Interview Conducted by  
Suzanne B. Riess

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Robert Glasner  
 April 19, 1977  
 Interviewed in Jean Wolff's apartment on Telegraph Hill,  
 San Francisco

1) Robert Glasner, Landscape Contractor

Riess: Are you Robert Glasner, Inc.?

Glasner: Just Robert Glasner.

Riess: And company?

Glasner: Yes, Francisco Landscape Contractors.

Riess: How big an operation is Francisco?

Glasner: Very small. We do small residential gardens only. Usually I do one job at a time, myself and two-three men.

Riess: I am interested in how and where you learned how to be a landscape contractor.

Glasner: Well, the only way to learn landscaping, of course, is in the field, doing it. I went through four years of college in which I learned almost nothing. It's very shocking to get out of college and to find that you know nothing. Because when you get out of college you think you know everything.

Riess: What did you want to be?

Glasner: A landscape contractor, well, I mean an installer.

Riess: Had you known other landscape contractors?

Glasner: Well, I went to school with--I don't know if you've ever heard of Herman Hein?

Riess: No, I haven't.

Glasner: In Marin County he's sort of like Tommy Church, an old German landscape architect. I went to school with his son, that's how I happened to get involved.

But primarily, when I got out of the service, World War II, I knew that I wanted to do one thing and that was to work outside. So I looked into two things that I knew of that were outside and one was to be a forester, a forest agent, and one of them was to be something concerning gardens.

Riess: Where did you go to school?

Glasner: I went to school at Cal Poly, California Polytechnic.

Riess: And did they have courses that were directly related to what you wanted to do?

Glasner: Yes, they're actually probably the finest school for this kind of work in the United States, anyway.

Riess: That's very interesting to me because I keep hearing the sad story of how nobody knows how to do anything and they all have to learn it on the job. But there is some training. It must be very parallel to what a landscape architect learns, then?

Glasner: Well, it's better than what a landscape architect--usually landscape architects don't know anything. This is a real problem. Because when they get out of school, the knowledge that they've gotten is the stuff you get out of books, and actually what landscaping is is problem-solving.

Riess: That sounds like why they need the landscape contractor.

Glasner: Well, first of all you have to understand what a landscape contractor is. Because there's a great confusion as to these various aspects of landscaping. A landscape contractor is essentially a construction man. For example, this garden that you see out here [Jean Wolff's] would take about two days to plant and about two months to install, all of it construction.

You have grades, steps, concrete, drainage, lighting, masonry work, and that's all construction. The planting is what you do after you finish all your construction. And you come here with plants and two or three men and it's all done in two days time. So what you see is finish. But all the ground work, that's all construction work. And you use all the trades, so you have to be essentially a construction man.



Glasner: I did a job for Ed Gauer. It took 18 months. We spent two weeks planting, and the rest of the time doing construction.

Riess: I wonder how much time the actual design takes?

Glasner: Well, the design should be a continuing thing through the whole project. The first concept is done on paper, which is an arbitrary thing. Never works on the ground, that's why you always have supervision fee, and the reason for that is because they know you can't do it on paper and that you have to "field-design," because that's really what it is.

## 2) Making the Plans Fit the Site

Glasner: The problem with most architects is that they don't understand this. They think that it's all done on paper and you can solve the problems on paper. That's why Tommy Church is so unique; he understands that you have to field design, that's where it is. I've worked for all the architects, and he is head-and-shoulders above anybody else at that kind of thing.

Riess: It sounds like the others then would make an attempt to get it all on paper, Tommy wouldn't.

Glasner: Tommy would do it on paper too, because that gives you the essential direction. But the things that make a job are details. Without the details, this job just doesn't work together. And that's where you have to solve it, that's where it's very critical to have the astute mind and that's what Tommy has, the experience and almost-genius at these things.

Riess: It is interesting to think that while landscape architects' training lasts longer and takes in more of the allied areas yet they come out of school raw, and have to be educated.

Glasner: Incredible. You have to be able to walk out on the job and first of all, recognize the problems. You can't ever get it in a classroom. A classroom just doesn't give you the experience, the manual experience of being involved in the actual field work. The only way to recognize problems is to have been involved in them. You can't get that involvement in a classroom. There's just no way.

The reason why it was so delightful working for Tommy is that way back in the first part of his career he was one of the few architects who actually worked. In the early part of his career he

Glasner: actually installed gardens. So with that background he was able to recognize and to solve these problems. And the problem with most of the architects is that the apprenticeship program for an architect is that you go through school, then you sit in somebody's office for two years, and that's considered an apprenticeship and then you're an architect. You have no experience whatsoever at gardening [laughter], none!

Riess: Because when you're sitting in that office you're just working on refining some two-dimensional plan.

Glasner: Yes, you're just involved with the paper and you're essentially involved in graphing. You do some field supervision, but just walking out and being involved in a job for 15 or 20 minutes at a time is not what you need for a suitable background.

Because the thing about gardening is you have to be able to recognize the problems. The problem with most of these architects is that they simply don't recognize. Like I get plans all the time and I have a hard time bidding jobs to these people because I come out and I look at the plans and then I go out on the job and I recognize the problems that they haven't solved. Well, I can't bid the job the way it's drawn because I know that isn't the job. They simply haven't answered the problems.

Riess: So what do you do then?

Glasner: It becomes very difficult. You can't walk into an architect who is--I mean, there is a regular layer of authority; there's the owner, the architect, and the installer. Well, for the third man down to be telling the second man up that "you don't know what you're doing" is kind of a mistake. [Laughter]

Riess: You have learned how to get around that one by now.

Glasner: You have to be very careful because they don't like to be told that they don't know what they're doing.

Riess: Of course you're saving their reputation in a way.

Glasner: Yes. What you do is you sort of limit the people that you do work for. You either do your own work, like I do, mostly, or you work for people like Thomas Church. In the last 15 years I've done no other work but Tommy Church's work. Because I've found that most of the people I was working for simply were not answering the problems. I was wasting my time bidding the jobs because the people I was bidding against had less experience than I had and they weren't recognizing the problem. They were just bidding the job as it was

Glasner: drawn. So of course it cost far less to bid a job that doesn't have the problems that I see. I can't bid the job the way it's drawn, because I know that that isn't the job. [Laughter] So it makes a problem.

Riess: Can you generalize about the kind of major things that they miss.

Glasner: The problem is that it's an arbitrary plan and what they draw is so they can get involved with the details of the design. And what they get involved with are the lines as they relate to each other on this piece of paper. And so you take these lines, which are very pretty on the piece of paper, and you take them out and they don't fit. They just don't fit.

It might look very nice, for instance, to have two steps going down to something. Well, if you consider what just one step is: that's 6 inches. Now 6 inches doesn't seem very important, but if you have to bring in 6 inches of material or export 6 inches of material because the design is pretty on a piece of paper, and you have to take it through a house in buckets, that 6 inches of material over say 500 square feet can be 30 or 40 yards of material. This is what I'm talking about, one line as arbitrary as that. So you have to site your plan, you have to go out and relate yourself to the plan. That's the first thing.

Of course, then the second thing is to be able to take the people and involve them directly in what you're doing. And this is another area in which Tommy Church was superlative. Most landscape architects are an end in themselves. In other words, they know more than anybody. They create an arbitrary design to please their egos rather than the needs of their clients. More times I've gotten this, where the people have said, "Well, this isn't what I wanted."

Riess: You're probably the one who hears that.

Glasner: Of course. You know, I start doing this thing and they say, "What are you doing?"

"Well, this is the plan..."

The problem is that most people will not admit to the fact that they don't understand the landscape plan. So they okay the plan, it's written right on it, "OK," they've signed it. But they don't know what's on there, because it's just these lines. Essentially what architects are are salespeople. Like any job, if they don't sell themselves, they simply don't have the job. The business of being a salesperson and being a competent draftsman and being a competent landscape designer are all the things that you have to be. And you have to be all these things.



Riess: I can see in a way why it's tempting to just do a very snappy design and get somebody to okay it, because that's where their money is, I mean that's it for them.

Glasner: Right, to produce it. But to get in there and really research it and really make the thing work is--which is why you'll find most landscape architects now aren't involved in residential work. Almost none of them do residential work except in very special cases.

Riess: Because to do a good job is too expensive?

Glasner: It takes just as much time or more with consultation and detailing. What makes a job work is detailing. Just like that step I talked to you about, that's a detail. But it's what makes the job work.

Riess: Sure and all the implications of the step.

Glasner: Yes, I mean that step can make all the difference. It relates to the retaining structures that are involved, and it pertains to everything around it, it pertains to grading, it pertains to drainage, everything, just that one step. And if the step is wrong, the whole garden can be wrong. No matter how pretty it is or whatever, if that one step is misplaced, nothing's going to work. It takes a special thing to observe that.

The thing about Tommy Church was that he was loose, he recognized that it was impossible to see all those things.

Riess: Though he did go out to the site a lot.

Glasner: Yes, well the value of myself and what-do-you-call-it [Floyd Gerow] was that we would take that end of it.

Riess: No, but I mean when he was doing the design, it sounds like he did a lot of walking around.

Glasner: Well, the reason why he was able to work with me on residential work is because I essentially took up that end of it. In other words, he didn't have to design it down to the step. Because if it wasn't right, I would re-design the job so it looked the same, but it would be different.

Riess: So he could indicate walls and curves?

Glasner: Well, essentially, if he just laid it out, in other words if he gave direction, which is the essential genius of a job; in other words, to come out--like this yard [Wolff] here has several distinct areas. That essentially is what a garden is, areas of use and definition.



Glasner: The front area is an extension of this room. Then you have the lower court, which by its material indicates a different use. This is concrete and that's gravel, so that would be a less formal area, it wouldn't be used as much, wouldn't be used, for example, in rainy weather. You'd probably be using this concrete area. Then you have a hedge there which defines that as a wall. Beyond that are utility areas and all of your various kinds of areas; I think there's a vegetable garden there and there's a storage area right behind there, and up in the corner there's something else.

The essential thing is to give you all these things, so that it's aesthetically attractive, within the person's budget. But if you do that, if you just take the yard area and you define these areas, not only do you have to be practical, but it has to be aesthetic. Now these lines here if you notice, because this is a long, narrow yard, the lines are pointed this way [angled]. So it isn't a corridor effect any more.

If this was just a straight patio, then it would accentuate the fact that you have a long, narrow yard. By tilting this at this angle, you don't have that feeling any more. By having lines this way, the feeling is of a broad yard. If he gives this kind of direction, this kind of design, then that's what the landscape contractor [can follow through on], without calling him every day about all that step being wrong. Like with me he wouldn't have to put elevations or anything on it. He'd just draw it out like this on the back of an envelope. He'd just take a piece of paper out of his pocket and say, "Well, let's see, I'll put some stairs here and this thing ought to be like this," and he'd hand it to me.

Riess: Well, that's a racket.

Glasner: What's that?

Riess: I mean that really is an awful lot of responsibility to you.

Glasner: That's marvelous. Because then I'm involved.

Riess: And you would like to take it from as high or responsible a point as possible.

Glasner: Oh, yes, because then I'm involved in the process, a creative process. He hasn't solved the engineering, he hasn't solved anything. All he's done is given direction. Well then, if I go through it and find that I'm stuck, then I could call him and say, "Hey, Tommy, I'm into this thing and this is what your intention was, how do you think we should carry it through?" And then on the phone he could say, "Well, I think you should do this and this and so forth."

Glasner: The reason why he had to work with somebody like me is that as important as he is--you know he has jobs going all over the world, consultation--if I had to call him every time we came across a problem, that's all I'd be doing. On the other hand, he can't afford the time on a little residential garden to come out here and do a thorough engineering job. First of all, you have to survey it and it has to be microsurveyed because there are important trees and shrubs and these things that you don't want to cut out or destroy. And to locate every one of them on a plan, it's just unreasonable. So what you do, if you can, is you give direction and then have somebody like me who is competent enough to carry that through so that he can leave and be gone six weeks and come back and say, "Hey, this looks great." And yet it's what he wants. But that takes 20 years of background [laughter] so I can do that.

### 3) Learning the Business

Riess: I want to go back and sort of fill in that background. You got out of college and then what?

Glasner: I went to work for a nursery so I could learn something about plants.

Riess: Here in northern California?

Glasner: Yes, in San Rafael. That's where after all those years of pasting leaves in books you find out that you know absolutely nothing about plants. People come in, they have this thing, this plant: "What is it?" and suddenly you are confronted with this mass of background that you simply don't have. Because when people come in and nail you with these questions about the horticultural problems, there's thousands of plants, each one of them does different things and they require different cultural necessities.

And people come in with these things and they hand them to you and say, "What is this? How the hell does it grow? What is that black spot on there?" and all this. You're standing there: "Where's my book? Where's my leaf?"

Riess: You can't pass the buck on that one.

Glasner: No, you're standing there, defenseless. You can't get a "C." This is the problem: college is no place for anybody. There're these two worlds, the world of learning, and college, and the problem with college is that it's too circumspect, it doesn't involve you in process.

- Glasner: That's where college has its big failure is that it actually divorces you from process. The great world doesn't receive these little definitions. The rewards you get out there are not A-B-C-D. These are not acceptable.
- Riess: It's pass and fail.
- Glasner: That's right, it's pass and fail. That's exactly what it is and kids have to learn this. When they get out of school they think it's okay to do a "C" job. And it isn't.
- Riess: But in a way you're saying that with a really competent back-up person like yourself, it is okay to do a "C" job because there will be somebody there to rescue you.
- Glasner: No--
- Riess: For a landscape architect to do a sort of middling job.
- Glasner: Well, you still have to have the genius of design. If his designs were poor, then all I'm going to do is install a poor job because he is essentially giving the direction. The basic direction is always the thing. That gives you a T. Church job, because that special direction that he gives, where his lines are very simple, is backgrounded by 30 or 40 years of experience before he can make those lines. Those lines which might be just a couple curves, a couple this, and a couple that--that's the result of all these years of experience.
- Riess: That's marvelous. It's like a Zen teacher or something.
- Glasner: That's right, that's right. Actually, the more experience and the more clever you are, the more simple these things can become because you see the problems and solve them all in just one sweep.
- Riess: And also you give up some of the need to control every last aspect of it.
- Glasner: Well, the details are what make the job.
- Riess: Then how do they really get communicated then, the details?
- Glasner: Well, you can draw a very comprehensive plan--
- Riess: Well, let's go from your two curves and a wall. Because of your long experience with Church, the details don't--
- Glasner: I kind of understand his mind. I understand what he wants. It's up to me to engineer the job so that's essentially what it is.

Riess: Okay, let's go back to how you got connected with him and how it is that you do understand what he wants because it certainly must not have always been that way from the very beginning.

Glasner: Well, I did a job for him.

Riess: He found you through the nursery?

Glasner: No. I was an independent contractor. It was actually June Meehan, who worked for his office a good many years ago, who first contacted me. I forget how I became involved, I think it was because she might have just gotten me out of the phone book.

I did a small job for him and it was satisfactory. Then I did another job for him and it just sort of went on from there. What happened is he used to have a person in the San Francisco area who did what I did for him. This fellow retired and so there was sort of a little vacuum there. I guess they were trying to find somebody to take that place.

It takes a special crew to have done that work that way. In other words, I just couldn't take a crew and put them on one of his jobs. Because I simply didn't have the direction from him in the way of detailed drawings to do that. I had to do all the solving. I had to actually be involved myself, so that meant that I had to work myself and keep my crew very small and actually tailor it to what his needs were. So that's what I did, because it was very satisfying to me. I couldn't simply just take a crew and put them on his job and say, "Well, this is what you do today." Because it just wouldn't have worked.

Riess: So that relationship with him has really defined the kind of business you have?

Glasner: Yes, the kind of business that I conducted. If I had stayed as a large landscape operation, which I was in before, doing commercial projects and schools and things like that, I simply couldn't have done this work for him. He needed this special kind of attention where he just gives me an envelope with a couple of lines on it. To carry that all the way through takes just being there all the time.

Riess: Who was his San Francisco person before you? Do you remember?

Glasner: I don't know his name--Alec something.

Riess: Alec Cattini, that's right.



Glasner: Yes, Alec worked for him for quite awhile.

Riess: During the time that you've been working for Church you've also been doing jobs for other landscape architects?

Glasner: Yes, occasionally. Usually he kept me pretty much busy all the time, but occasionally.

Riess: You got a chance, though, to see what the difference was?

Glasner: Well, I did the other guys before I got to Church. That's why I was so happy to work with Church. I've worked for every office in the area.

#### 4) T. Church: Class

Riess: I'd be interested in some of the contrasting experiences.

Glasner: Yes, there was Osmundson and Staley, that was an office. And Eckbo and Royston--of course all these offices have changed.

Riess: Now that's interesting because Osmundson and Royston have both been with Church.

Glasner: That's right.

Riess: And so they have learned the Church lesson.

Glasner: No. [Laughter] No. They've only been with Church, they didn't learn any lessons. As a matter of fact, their work seems to be aimed in an entirely, I think, other direction. I think they're trying to establish their own kind of design. Consequently, their designs are very arbitrary, very stiff, very modern and contemporary, or however you want to describe it. But they're not Church designs at all. Church is class. [Laughter] It's a very essential word. And these other people just don't have that definable thing. They make nice gardens.

Riess: Yes, and do they work?

Glasner: Yes, they work.

Riess: And for a contractor, it's a possible garden to install?

Glasner: Yes.

Riess: So you're not saying that there are those kind of problems with these firms?

Glasner: No, it's just that Church is sort of special.

Riess: But look, Church's clients had class, too. After all, if your client is some park department or some city bureaucrat, where do you get a chance to demonstrate your class?

Glasner: No, but I'm speaking of residential gardens. Church also did parks and things like that. He worked for colleges and parks. He did the whole spectrum.

Riess: Well, I certainly believe that Church gardens have class, but I'm sure "our readers," could do with a better definition of what you think.

Glasner: Well, I think you have to see it. I think it's a total picture. That's what a garden is, it's a total picture.

Riess: Does that mean that it looks expensive? Is that class?

Glasner: No, it has a charm. You have to look at it and say, "Well, this is a charming garden." Or you look at it and say, "Gee, this garden-- what's wrong with it? Why am I not comfortable in this garden?" This is essentially what it is.

A garden is an involvement. With Church's gardens, the involvement is always charm. I think this is the essential thing. I think most of the rest of them don't have that. You walk into them and they're flashy or they're neat or they're cute or there's something about them that seems to get the eye. There's always something sort of fancy about them. And Church's gardens aren't fancy. They have this essential feeling of ease. People relate well to the garden. In other words, they're comfortable in the garden.

Riess: Oh, yes, that helps.

Glasner: Well, you walk into the garden, you have a feeling, like you can look at a picture and say, "Gee, I like that picture." Well, everybody is entitled to your own feeling about what these things are. Church's gardens sometimes are so understated that you really don't know why you like the garden. You just walk into it, and you just feel good. And that's what a garden should do, a garden shouldn't hit you across the head with these fancy lines and all this stuff.

Glasner: Most architects like to imprint their own personality on a garden. This is why the gardens lose their charm; it's because there's too much imprint. You walk into it and the lines are hitting you, diagonals that you can't live with and these things. You don't know why but you're not really as comfortable as you should be. Church's gardens are soft. Just like here, you look out there and if you start analyzing why it is, you'll see.

Riess: Yes, but that's his personality, too, isn't it.

Glasner: Yes.

Riess: So he is imprinting his personality, and it's very conducive to a very pleasant experience.

Glasner: That's right.

Riess: Everybody says they can tell a Church garden instantly.

Glasner: Yes. Well, I don't know about that. I've done some gardens, like I did three gardens for him that were side by side. And each garden is so different because they reflected the people.

Gee, I wonder why they'd say that? Because the gardens I've done with Church have been just so different, one to the other.

Riess: Well, I've heard the expression "a Tommy Church garden" enough so that it sounds like the people that are using it mean that it's definable.

Glasner: Well, I think it's a social thing to say. In other words, if you say, "I have a Tommy Church garden" this is very social. It means that you've got the best. But I don't think it really refers to a type. You wouldn't really believe that these three gardens were all done by the same person, because they reflected the needs of the individual person [client].

Riess: Can you sort of boil down what distinguished those three houses?

Glasner: Well, one was a couple who liked gardening a lot. They wanted to entertain outside, and they wanted a lot of work to do. So this was a very detailed garden. It had a little sitting area outside. It had two decks, a little arbor, a little gazebo effect out there, and then we had all these little planting areas scattered all the way through that she could develop herself. We left these things in such a way that there was actually quite a bit of gardening to do and highly detailed.

Glasner: Then the garden next door was a bank president whose wife wanted something very bold, no maintenance at all, and no gardening. So that was single-level with a large gravel area with a huge bench around it, and ivy and a place for a sculpture. That was it. It was all ready, with no detail, I mean just completely different. There was no way to believe that the same person had done the gardens.

#### 5) An Idea of How He Does It

Glasner: If you have a chance to go on our thing [photographing trip with Glasner and Jean Wolff for Sunset], you'll see that we're doing the same thing. This is what I got from Church is that what you do is that you have to listen to the people. And the way that he would do this is that he would walk on the job and he would say, "You know, I can't think of a thing to do." The first time he did that--

Whenever I went with Church it was always he and I together. He'd say, "I have a client to see. How about meeting me at a certain address." So I'd go out there and we'd meet together. Well, all these years I'd been involved with all these other architects and they're "very superior" and they "know it all." They're the ones who decide what to do.

Tommy would very softly say, "Well, I just can't see anything here." And so the people [clients] rush in. Because they're the ones who really know what they want. And so they're going to help him. They say, "Well, gee, don't you think we could put a patio here or something over there." And so he's got what they want. They've lived with the area for a year or two years or whatever, and so essentially they've found, themselves, the best way to do this. Then he takes what they have pointed out, and he creates this, and of course they love it, because it's what they want, they've already told him.

Most guys walk out there and they say, "Well, okay, I'll do this and I'll do that," and so on and so on, and the people are telling them what they want, but they're busy talking to themselves. It never penetrates. They don't get into the people and find out what they want.

I always thought that this was so amazing that somebody with this power and world-wide reputation would stand there and say, "I can't think of a thing." [Laughter] Because whenever somebody called me, I always felt like I had to do something. To say that



Glasner: you don't have any ideas was to be absolutely fantastic! How can anybody do that? So I always do the same thing now. And it works beautifully. Because the people are very sympathetic. They understand: how can you just stand there and make up all these things? So they come rushing over with the ideas and by gum that's the way to do it.

Riess: Even the turn of phrase is very good. It's different from saying, "What do you want?" to the client and putting them right on the spot.

Glasner: Yes. "I just can't think of anything."

Riess: Well, you must have had to learn to keep your mouth quiet at that point, too.

Glasner: Oh, boy! I just watched. I watched that man and I could just see that mind turn because he's listening to these people.

Riess: And then he starts to note things down?

Glasner: Yes, yes. Then he pulls out the pencil and the hunk of paper and he starts putting it out there. And always his things were so right. Like I say, it's hard to describe the essential Church. But usually what he'd come up with was always so right. It was great to see him operating because it was just like a revelation. Because he'd stand there and I'd be looking, nothing would happen to me. [Laughter] And then when he'd draw it, I'd say, "Yes, by golly that's perfect."

Then for me it was always so great to take this and develop it because you could see this was the right thing to do. It was a great learning experience for me, of course, watching him. Fantastic. I mean four years of school was nothing. Just one visit with this guy was better than four years of school, just the whole process.

Riess: I want to pick up some tag ends. I want to hear about that third garden, after that strong contrast between the first two.

Glasner: Well, the third garden was more Oriental.

Riess: Somebody said to him, "We want an Oriental garden"?

Glasner: Yes, more into the Oriental. We used Oriental elements; it wasn't an Oriental garden, but it was more Oriental in feeling. But again it had nothing to do with either of the other two gardens. It was a very highly structured--the first garden had a lot of detail but it

Glasner: was sort of loose in composition, and the second garden was very, very plain, and this third garden was highly structured with a lot of Oriental elements in it.

Riess: By highly structured, do you mean walls and levels?

Glasner: Yes, walls, levels, a very formal aspect. In other words, something would be here and here and a center pool.

Riess: Axial?

Glasner: Yes, very, very highly structured, but they had a very Oriental feeling in the house and they wanted to carry that through. So when you looked out you had this same feeling, this continuity of design right through the house.

Riess: Well, it sounds like they were a very clear client, really dictating, ordering up what they wanted in that case.

Glasner: Yes.

Riess: On that idea of carrying the theme of the house into the garden, I've asked architects who have worked with Tommy whether his work is inclined to enhance the architect's work or to be really quite separate.

Glasner: No, he wanted the garden to belong. That again is one of the nice things about it is that he tried to carry through. I think he was the first person who really made the garden part of the house. That's the essential contribution that Tommy made; normally you built a house and then you put in a garden and they were two things and there was no orientation of one to the other. I think Church is the first really great exponent of making people feel that the garden was essential to the house.

Riess: And a lot of that would come with materials, wouldn't it?

Glasner: Well, composition and materials. For example, if you're building a fence, there's a thousand ways to build a fence, but if you build the fence out of the same materials as the house, then you have this projection, the house becomes longer. For example if it's a fence in front of the house, then the house has altogether different proportions and it looks like the house keeps going, whereas if you just build a stick fence or grape stake or something then there's a line, boom! here's the house and here's the end. Whereas if you just pick up the same materials as the house itself, then the wall of the house encloses the garden.

Riess: And so that's why it's ideal to start out working with the architect in fact.

Glasner: Oh, yes, it's absolutely essential that the landscape architect or the garden designer should be in in the beginning. For one thing, you can save tons of money, because the utilities are out there. For example, instead of building a house and then having to get behind there by hand and digging out all these huge piles of dirt, you could do it with a big machine, in dump trucks, before you pour the foundation. It would be great if you did that and had, for example, your electrical leads outside and your plumbing leads outside where they belong, and your drainage systems all tied in properly. Usually we have to come in and blast holes in the foundation and there's no way to get back there. Oh, you quadruple the cost of a landscape job just because there's no forethought and it would be so easy [laughter] to have done it with the proper equipment.

Riess: About what percentage of the jobs you have done for him have been from scratch?

Glasner: Well, most of the jobs I've done with him have been in these old San Francisco homes. So I've done almost none. I did one big one for him up in Healdsburg.

Riess: That's the Gauer?

Glasner: That was the Gauer, Ed Gauer. Yes, that was quite a job. Very instructive.

## 6) Compared to Architecture--

Riess: When you said most landscape architects had never been out in the dirt, and their early experience hadn't involved digging, it occurred to me that one of the reasons anybody would go into landscape architecture would be the same reasons that you went into landscape contracting, because they wanted to be out of doors and wanted to be associated with the earth.

Glasner: Well, a landscape architect is never outdoors; he's in the office. That's why I'm not a landscape architect. That's why I'm a landscape contractor and not an architect. [Laughter]

Riess: I wonder what people are thinking of when they go into landscape architecture, and I guess I have to think of how landscape architecture has moved toward city planning.

Glasner: Well, from what I've seen of them, a lot of them start out as building architects and can't make it. It's a softer program. It isn't near the requirements to be a landscape architect. You aren't nearly as much involved in some of the higher math and things like that to be a landscape architect. So if you can't make it as an architect, then you can drop down and be a landscape architect because the demands, the plus and minus factors, are much less. A garden hasn't near the demands made. (Actually, it has more demands made, but superficially. The more demands is that the experience factor is much more necessary to build a proper garden; you have to be able to solve the garden through experience.)

A house is usually kind of easy because a house, the first thing you do is put a platform up, and it's an artificial platform. From there, it's simple because it's level and the dimensions are exact and you can go from there. But a garden is like this (gestures) and all the elements in there are here, there, and somewhere else. So all of your garden elements and all of your design has to incorporate all the problems that all these things create and still become part of the design.

Riess: But basically it's still such a fluid medium compared to a house.

Glasner: That's it.

Riess: A house gets more and more rigid and you hope there are no grievous errors.

Glasner: In what? The house or the garden?

Riess: In the house, it seems to me because the house is so much more permanent.

Glasner: Well, but it's so exact. You draw the lines and they're all just so. You put a door there and a window there and the heat and then it's a question of just putting things in the right place so that you don't block your view or whatever.

But a garden, every foot is a problem. Either something is in the way or, for example, it might call for someplace that you want to plant a big plant or a big tree or something. Well, you start digging and there's this huge rock, outcrop, well what do you do? Suddenly you've got this enormous problem. The tree is called for, the design is all oriented to this particular spot, and you can't do it. Well, that's not true from a house. A house is no problem. You've got an artificial platform, you can do whatever you want.

Riess: That's the kind of problem you like, I'll bet.



Glasner: Yes, it's fun because then you can re-design the whole, you know. What's fun is re-designing an area so that it is re-designed but looks the same. That's what's sport because what you do is you have to evaluate what that area is and then re-translate it so that all the relationships are the same but they're all different.

Riess: When you do that as artfully as you probably do, the one person who will really understand what you've achieved is Tommy.

Glasner: Well, it's best if he doesn't see that I've done anything.

Riess: I know, but wouldn't you want somebody to appreciate the achievement?

Glasner: No, I know what I've done. To me, it's a personal thing. I don't need anything from anybody. [Laughter] It's very personal.

## 7) Choosing the Contractor, and the Client

Riess: When did you get your first job? I just would like to understand what period of time your work for Tommy spans. When do you think June first picked you out of the book?

Glasner: Time is always a problem with me. [Laughter] What is today?

If I go back 15 years--let's see, that takes me back to 1960.

I still continue to do work for these people [other landscape architects] occasionally, not as much, thank God. But before then, it was all work for these companies. So, I was four years in college, that takes you up through '50, and then from '50 to '60, about ten years prior to that I was in the field, and working with all these architects. I think I've done work for almost every architect in the book.

Working for all these guys you don't really know how stifling it is until you've come across Tommy Church and then it's like a breath of clean air. He makes everything seem so simple. His designs always seem so simple.

Riess: He was available when there was a difficulty? Sounds like if you come across a problem you have his mandate to just go ahead and solve the problem. But if it's insoluble, was he easily reached?

Glasner: No, he was almost never there. [Laughter] That's why I got very good at solving the problems because he was almost never there.

Riess: Other people in the office then, would they come out?

Glasner: Well, they didn't even know the job. See the problem was that none of the work was documented, because I'd call up Walt Guthrie, who was in the office, and I'd say, "Hey, Walt, I've come across this reall doozer here."

And he'd say, "Well, just a second. I'll see if I can locate the plan." He'd come back and say, "Well, we don't have anything in the office on that job at all." He'd say, "Bob, you just have to use your best judgment."

So after a while that's what I got to do. [Laughter] Because wherever Tommy was, he was unreachable. It wasn't worth calling all over the world for this, anyway. The essential thing was to take his direction, take his job, and make it come out so that it would look exactly like what he had on that plan so when he walked out he wouldn't realize there was any difference. In other words, essentially the design was there. And if I did that, then I was accomplishing.

Riess: The plan was always an overhead sketch or were there elevations?

Glasner: No, just overhead.

Riess: Well, it sounds like it wouldn't be too hard to get something that looked exactly like that.

Glasner: That's right.

Riess: But all the materials were indicated though, weren't they?

Glasner: Yes, plus or minus. He'd say, "A stone wall here and railroad ties there," whatever. Yes, he would essentially indicate.

Riess: When a client bought the design from him, that was that. They didn't hire him for supervision?

Glasner: I think that he was involved in the supervision of it. I was essentially an extension.

Riess: Did he include your fee in his bid?

Glasner: No, I was an independent.

Riess: But when he was working with you, it was not put out to bid, then?

Glasner: No, I didn't bid any work to him at all. All the work that I did was on a cost plus basis. I mean the job really wasn't that well defined.

Riess: And this didn't make for great difficulties?

Glasner: No, never. This is the lovely thing about working with Church; he had the absolute confidence of the client. It's very difficult for people to have that relationship. I've never had this with anybody else. There's no other architect that can do this. I always try to work on this basis and sometimes it doesn't work.

Church, as long as he'd been in the field, and with the vast amount of clients that he had, was able to select. In other words, if you have 20 clients, you just wouldn't work for a lot of people. More often I've come across people in San Francisco for whom "Tommy Church" was a magic word. Immediately when you start working in San Francisco, all the neighbors start clustering because they're very protective of their little space. So the instant that there's any infringement here, they come running.

I'd say, "Tommy Church suggested that I do this to this tree."

"Oh, Tommy Church. We've been trying to get ahold of him for two years. How do we get ahold of Tommy Church?"

Well, there's an awful lot of people he just wouldn't do jobs for because he couldn't be bothered on small, residential jobs. In order to bid a job, you have to have a very detailed plan. And that takes more work than I think he was willing to do.

If they wouldn't trust him with just going ahead, having me do the work and do it on a cost-plus basis, then I guess he just wasn't interested. Or if they insisted, he would sometimes do it and he would draw it up, do the whole thing, and then he would just put it out to bid, have four or five contractors come in and bid the job out. I never did any of those. I just did the cost plus work. There was enough there to keep me pretty busy. He had other contractors who he'd put that kind of work out to.

Riess: Then he was picking and choosing his clients, on the basis of how he sized them up as being reasonable customers?

Glasner: Right.

Riess: He could tell that on the phone?

Glasner: Well, a lot of them were referrals. With the vast clients that he had, a lot of them were family members, the son of somebody, or the brother or cousin or something of somebody he had already done work for. So this is the way that he would come on to the job. When people come to him, the relationship is different. They would come begging him to do the work. [Laughter] "Please, anything."

Riess: "Just leave your footprint in our backyard."

Glasner: Yes, anything. He was just so difficult to get because he was very selective and he just wouldn't do everybody's garden.

Riess: You'd think, though, that with all those people that went through his office, Halprin and Royston and so on, that they would have learned enough in that situation and also learned how desirable that method of working was, that they would have picked it up. Do you think there's anybody now on the scene who can do it?

Well, you can. You're saying that what you've learned puts you in a position to do it really, along with Jean Wolff.

Glasner: Yes, I think the gardens that we're doing now reflect his work very well.

Riess: How about some of the other people that have come out of the office? Casy Kawamoto and Jack Stafford and Walt Guthrie?

Glasner: Well, these people all do nice gardens, they're just not T. Church gardens, that's all. But there's all levels of endeavor, you know. I guess a "B" garden is all right. [Laughter]

#### 8) The Virtues and Hazards of Planting

Riess: Well, of course, as some would say, "All you need to do is just cover it up with a little ivy and shrubs." In other words, you can gloss over a multitude of errors in a garden, can't you?

Glasner: Yes, of course your plant materials are the great savior anyway. When you plant a garden, depending upon how it's maintained, of course, the plants essentially take a garden over. You can pretty much lose the detail of a garden with planting. This quite often happens anyway; no matter how well a garden is done or how poorly a garden is done, eventually the planting just sort of softens it all up and it becomes a big hodgepodge of plants. Quite often this is very pleasing. You look out and there's no design there, but it's all green and it's soft.

When a garden is first put in, the design is very strong because that's all you see. The plants are very small, and they don't really contribute. In two or three years the plants start becoming effective structures in the garden. That's what plants really are, are structures, and if you think of a plant as a physical structure, you can say to yourself, "Would I put a structure like that out of wood



Glasner: there?" That's the definition of whether you should be planting such an area or not.

This is where there is a great failing in a lot of these design people, in that they don't understand the structures they're using, that they are structures, and will be structures, and all these structures relate to the other structures that you're using. In other words, do I want a form like that? Because that's what I'm going to have. Well, a lot of gardens become so that the structures all disappear. They just sort of prune the outside and it all just sort of melds out and the structures that were planted are no longer there because it just becomes just a face, homogenized. So essentially whether the garden was originally a good one or a bad one disappears. And a lot of Church's gardens have disappeared. You come into some of these old gardens and it's just all wall because the people have let it all go. So the plus or minus factor isn't very great because after awhile it all disappears, if it's allowed to do so.

Riess: You're saying that the plus or minus factor is or isn't very great?

Glasner: It's great. Even a bad job is acceptable, as long as it isn't harmful; in other words, if the water doesn't run in through the front door. But whether the thing should have been angled like that or like that (gestures) really isn't that critical, I mean you can live with both of them.

Riess: When did the planting plans come along?

Glasner: We always planted out after all the construction work was done. He wouldn't even guess before then. He'd always say, "Well, let's wait until it's all in."

Riess: I see, but he did come back and participate in that part of it?

Glasner: Oh, yes. He was very matter-of-fact about how he'd schedule these things. First of all we'd walk through and decide what to take out. He'd say, "When it's all ready for me, then let me know, so we can come out and design the garden itself."

In other words, if there was a bunch of stuff in the way then he wouldn't relate to it because there was too much conflict there. So he'd say, "Let's remove these things that are in the way, these hedges and fences, and take out those trees and things like that that are what we're going to remove." He'd say, "When that's all done, let me know." So I'd get it all clear.

Glasner: He'd come out and he'd say, "Now okay I can relate to this thing." Then we'd design the organization of the garden. If we'd ask him about plants or so forth, he'd say, "Well, this isn't the time." Because then you relate the planting to the organization of the garden. After it's in, then you can start relating to it, but until it's in, it's hard to do that.

Riess: Some people, though, are going to be really pretty insistent about the plants early on.

Glasner: With Church, you mean?

Riess: Wouldn't you think? Because that is the reason they wanted a garden, to have a particularly beautiful tree or something like that?

Glasner: Oh, well, he would put in his structural garden. Trees are basic; in other words, a garden has bones, or a skeleton, and that is all the construction work and the main planting elements, the unchangeable things like the trees and the big shrubbery and things like that. Then the flowers and stuff he pretty much left to the people themselves so they could express themselves. He would leave open areas particularly for the people. He'd say, "Now this is what I want you to do." Which I thought was great. So in other words, whatever they did didn't make any difference because the basic garden was there. Whatever they did to these garden spaces wouldn't effect the basic design of the garden.

Riess: Did he see it in color do you think? Or was it more green and forms? Because I was thinking that was the one thing that the clients could mess up on; they could make it very jarring, I suppose.

Glasner: Well, he wouldn't leave them that much space. [Laughter]

Riess: They'd just put out their green plastic chaise and that would take care of it.

Glasner: Well, you know, if that's what they like.

#### 9) "The Man" and A Good Pruner Too

Riess: Before you started working with him, were there any famous gardens in the Bay Area that you were acquainted with that were his gardens? In other words, how much of a reputation preceded your meeting him?

Glasner: How much of his reputation do you mean?

Riess: Yes.

Glasner: Well, of course he was always "the man." Every time you picked up a Sunset garden book or whatever, there was always a T. Church. He was the "Frank Lloyd Wright of the landscape industry." You just sort of got that. [Laughter]

Riess: Wouldn't it be more correct to say that he was the William Wurster of the landscape industry?

Glasner: Well, I didn't know that much about William Wurster, but I did know about Frank Lloyd Wright. Frank Lloyd Wright was a world-renowned name. You could mention that to anybody and everybody knows that, who Frank Lloyd Wright was. He was an innovator.

Riess: And a bit of a crank also.

Glasner: Yes, well that was something else. But I mean he certainly had a reputation. William Wurster I guess had a reputation but it wasn't on the same scale. You could ask somebody about William Wurster and some wouldn't know. But if you ask them about Frank Lloyd Wright, everybody knows about Frank Lloyd Wright. So I was thinking of that in more of a reputation level than competence. Church, in the landscape industry, to me, was about on that level. I couldn't think of anybody else of that stature, Royston or Osmundson and Staley, or Vogley or whatever.

Riess: Halprin wasn't?

Glasner: Well, of course Halprin was more controversial. Because a lot of his work was so bad. [Laughter] I mean really bad. The only thing I can think of right off the bat is that fountain [Vallaincourt] down there.\* God! I mean this was built with his approval, with his instigation! Now you know that Church couldn't be involved in something like that. Halprin's done some very nice things. But he's also done some real bum ones.

Riess: You're saying that Church was the "Frank Lloyd Wright," in other words, that he had that large reputation. Yet he wasn't a public figure, was he?

Glasner: No, no. It was his gardens. I don't think anybody really ever saw him.

Riess: That's interesting.

Glasner: No, he wasn't a flamboyant in any sense. I think it was the quality of his work that really impressed people. I think that's why when they say they have a T. Church garden there's a special imprint there.

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\*Market Street at Embarcadero, San Francisco

Glasner: I don't think it refers to a type, it means excellence. I think that's essentially what they're referring to. If you have a T. Church garden, it's probably as well done as it can be. I think that's primarily what is meant by that. I wouldn't regard it as a style like you say a lot of people do.

Riess: It sounds like a status symbol.

Glasner: Yes, exactly.

Riess: But if your work then becomes a status symbol you'd have to be really dedicated to keep doing good work because it would be so easy to do half-hearted work.

Glasner: I think gardening is an essential part of his being. I think he loves it. I think it is part of his frame. He really thought of it as being his vocation and an avocation both. I don't think he really did much else.

Riess: Did he ever come out and work on the job?

Glasner: He loved to prune. He always carried these pruners and sometimes we'd go out to a job, with no intention at all of being there more than say 15 or 20 minutes, or a half an hour on the outside, just a consultation. We'd spend half a day there. If I happened to have my truck then I would be out there hauling and he'd be out there and he loved nothing better than to just get involved in the pruning, the shaping of plants. Which is a very essential part--as I was saying, a garden loses its individuality unless the structural forms that you've put in there retain their individuality. This is what he was very good at, understanding all these relationships, the textural and the sculptural qualities of these various plants. And re-creating them, great sport, great fun.

Riess: Yes, that's like the Japanese gardeners' art.

Glasner: Yes, of course a Japanese garden is very highly structured though. The key is to not have the garden structured, have all the forms there without everything yelling at you. A Japanese garden is very strongly stylized, whereas the American garden tends to be more comfortable and relaxed.

The secret is to retain the individuality without it screaming at you. That's the key. If you can retain all the forms, and all the design intact without this very severe structure. With the Japanese, of course, it was almost a religious thing. It was involved deeply in their lives and so all of these details and all of these forms and all the relationships of all these things had a



Glasner: definite meaning to them. Whereas with us, that isn't so. With us it's just a design. You walk in, you want it comfortable, easy to live with and attractive. But with the Japanese, it's an entirely different thing.

Riess: I was thinking of the Japanese pruning and the way they can make trees transparent. You're thinking of raked sand and rocks and things like that?

Glasner: Well, it's the interrelationship of all these things, the lines. Even the way that they rake something has a flow. It relates to everything else, the rocks and the way the rake goes and the plant goes with it. These things all inter-relate. Well, in our American garden that isn't so because in the first place we have nobody to do that. Nobody has that time. If you have three generations of people living in a little tiny area, then you have the manpower and the need for that kind of development. We don't have that in the United States. That's why Japanese gardens are absurd in the United States, because that garden [Jean Wolff's] is as big as 28 houses. [Laughter]

Riess: I know the last time I was here, last week, we walked out into the garden and Jean was constantly snipping things off.

Glasner: Yes, well she has a man helping her and she herself puts in an inordinate amount of time. She doesn't have a family living with her; she spends all of her weekends. Well, most people are involved with kids and various hobbies.

Our gardens are too big for that kind of individual nurturing where you can spend half a day on one plant. If you figure the average Japanese garden, crowding a whole garden into a little tiny space, every inch of it is very important and you have the grandfather, he's retired and he's out there all day hand-picking all those little things. It takes a special kind of culture.

#### 10) A Big Job

Riess: Did you ever have to beef up your staff to do a Thomas Church job?

Glasner: Yes, on the Gauer job I had five carpenters, I had four masonry people, 15 laborers, four dump trucks, two other pieces of equipment. Well, we did an awful lot of work on that.

Riess: And you say it took you 18 months to do.

Glasner: Eighteen months.

Riess: But did you have all of that crew all of that time?

Glasner: Yes.

Riess: How much did that job cost?

Glasner: \$300,000, I think, yes, it was a neat job.

Riess: Tell me a little bit about that job, because we've talked about the small, residential garden.

Glasner: Yes, well that job he would have followed his normal procedures of drawing it up and bidding it out and so on except that there were a lot of problems with scheduling and also with the job site itself. The job site was actually a rock fall, just masses of rocks all around here. And there's no real way to get around, I mean he knew he wanted to get from here to there (gestures) but there was no way to draw it. So I just had to do it somehow.

Riess: Was there a house there?

Glasner: They were building a house at the same time. He wanted it all done at the same time.\* If we'd been able to come in later and do it, we could have cut the job cost in half, but we couldn't do that. All of that time we were working, they had all of their materials scattered around the house. As we worked we had to keep moving these materials around. They were doing a lot of terrazzo work and they'd have these huge piles of stone, these little terrazzo pebbles, and piles of cement and piles of lumber.

Then they were building this enormous fireplace. They had to keep 30 tons of rock on the job site all the time so you could select out of the 30 ton for an individual rock. It took that many rocks to find a rock each time because the fireplace they were building, they didn't want any of the rocks cut. That means you had to find a rock that had to be high enough and wide enough, so you had to have a lot of rocks. And we had to move this stuff.

We had to put a big utility ditch around the whole building. We had to put in our fire lines and our gas lines and all of our electrical control cables and our irrigation lines. For insurance there they had to put a big fire line, a big 4-inch galvanized fire line in. So all we could do at the most was dig a 20-foot ditch and put everything in it, back fill it, move something onto it, and you go along pick up the end of our 20-foot ditch and do another 20-foot ditch. Because everybody else had to keep working. So that made it kind of a problem.

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\*Ed Gauer wanted it all done at the same time. S.R.

- Glasner: It was impossible really to bid that kind of a job out, which is why it got to be such an expensive job, because we were doing so many things we shouldn't have been doing. If they had been able to build the house, then we could have come in later and just done it. It would have been much simpler. But we had to work with all these other trades.
- Riess: Why did you have to? They just had to have it done?
- Glasner: Well, he wanted us to be working at the same time they were working. In other words, he [Gauer] didn't want to wait and have the house built. He wanted to move in, have it all done. He didn't want to move in and have us working on the outside.
- Riess: Sounds like you probably could have worked twice as fast otherwise.
- Glasner: Oh easily. The job could have cost I'd say a third of that if we had been able to just do it at the right time. I said to him, I said, "Why don't you just wait until it's all finished and then we come in here and just zoom." Dig one ditch, dump everything in there, and drain it all out, it would have been simple.
- "No," he says, he wants it finished the same time the house is finished.
- Then as we were doing it, we had it drawn out but we had to kind of develop it as we were going, like try to work out these various kinds of pathways and planting areas and this big rock fall. It was kind of interesting.
- Riess: Rock fall?
- Glasner: Yes, it was just a big chunk of rock that was just sort of big mounds of rocks and stuff and there was no way to get from here to there, but we had to get from here to there. So I just had to take a machine and go up there and take a big rock and move it, take a big rock, move it, take a big rock, move it and then we'd build the side walls out of the rock and then fill it full, have a sand base, and then we just sort of kept on going up until we finally got from there to there. [Laughter]
- Riess: Don't tell me you started out with just a little sketch on that one. There must have been more than that.
- Glasner: No, no. He had that fairly well drawn out except in these rock areas. He sort of had the thing in there, but he said, "You'll have to work this out." [Laughter]



- Riess: Did Tommy use that technique of "I can't imagine what to do" on this job?
- Glasner: Oh, no, no, no. Well, now this was a different kind of a job, much different. No, I think he [Gauer] just pretty much let Tommy do what he wanted.
- Riess: Because I should think that lots of clients, and particularly a businessman who really has limited time, choose the architect because he'll just come and do the whole thing in a very professional way.
- Glasner: Yes, well that's what happened on that job. I'm sure that on most of the jobs that was the way it was.

I think this other was just a technique of his of exploring their mind. In other words, if he wanted to find out what he wanted to know, that was a technique he used. It was very effective. (I don't know if that's what he intended to do or not, but that was my understanding of what he was doing.)

#### 11) Garden Maintenance, Jean Wolff, and the Future

- Glasner: The essential thing is to understand that when you do a garden for somebody there's a point at which you finish the garden and you leave and then these people have the garden for the rest of their lives. And so it should be something that they want. I think that this is the most important part of any garden, that the client has to like it, has to be able to relate to that garden. I think the essential genius of Church is that he was able to bring the people themselves so greatly into the garden.

I went over and did some work in Tommy's garden here a month or so ago. I did what he does. I drew him into what I was doing. I started to prune and I'd say, "Hey, Tommy, how about this limb coming out of here?" (Because, you know, he's sitting down, he can see the structure.) So I'd take my saw and I'd point to the various parts of the branch: "Cut here, here, here," he would gesture as soon as I hit the right part. I really got him involved in it. Soon he got the nurse to pick him up and he got close to the job. So then all the way through I was asking him. Oh, boy! He was really living because then he was directing, and I was actually structuring his garden.

- Riess: That's great, and what was Jean doing? [Jean Wolff went to work on the Church's garden that day also.]



Glasner: Oh whatever Jean does; she finishes gardens. She prunes these little things and puts in plants and re-plants something. She's great at finishing a garden. Jean is the great master of garden finish.

Riess: And how do you work with Jean? How has your practice evolved now?

Glasner: Well, it's essentially what I used to do with Tommy. Jean and I walk out on a job and Jean is a great designer. She really is, she's a natural.

Riess: For a more intimate kind of garden would you say?

Glasner: Yes, these are small San Francisco gardens.

She's been involved in these gardens for a good many years. She's never received any formal training. I think that's good because I think she just has a natural sense of elegance. She has elegant gardens. A Jean Wolff garden is a very distinctive garden, very stylized.

Riess: Are there gardens that you would point to that reflect your own design sense, that you really feel are your gardens?

Glasner: Well, these gardens I'm doing now with Jean I think would reflect-- it's sort of interplay there between Jean and myself, we kind of brainstorm it. But I think we've done some pretty nice gardens. Recently we've got about six, seven gardens that we've done and I think they're excellent gardens, very good for the people, very individual gardens. Like one of them was for a young family and they needed play areas and easy maintenance, and the next one, in fact three of them were that way, but they're in different sections and the problems were different. I think a lot of what we've done is the Church influence. I think it's strong because I'm using his techniques, or I like to think that I am, for approaching people and solving the problems.

Riess: What is the future for residential gardens?

Glasner: Well, it's an expensive art. It takes money to do these things and it takes money to continue it. The problem is that you put them in and then there has to be a continuity there. Unfortunately, I don't do any maintenance work and really that's where it has to continue is in the maintenance end. I can't compete on maintenance end; my people are all construction people and they're getting their 15 and 20 dollars an hour and people don't pay that for maintenance work. I just have never got involved in that end of the thing, but it's an essential part of the installation really, this carry-through. I've seen, as I say, Church gardens that are totally unrecognizable

Glasner: because everything has lost the individual input. The elements that make a garden individual are all gone. If you got down and started looking for them, you could start getting a feeling, "Gee whiz, the essential design is here" but you don't get that feeling when you walk into it. It's just a big mass of green.

You normally overplant a garden to begin with. It's like buying a bouquet of roses, you expect to throw it away. But people don't do that. They think if you buy a plant, you can't throw it away. Well, there's a time to throw it away. In other words, if you plant a garden like it should be planted, it doesn't look like anything. So you overplant to give it some feeling of form. Well, then at a certain point in time the conflicting elements have to be removed for the garden to retain the essential design that you've put there. Quite often this is not done.

You just look out there at Jean's garden and if that back wall was moved up forward about 30 feet, you'd lose everything. She had a row of trees that were planted right behind here and it stopped the garden view. These plants have different functions at different times and something deciduous loses its leaves and you can see through it. And a lot of things are not deciduous, and as they grow larger they become a wall, as effective as a concrete wall. So she had a lot of evergreen trees there and we just took those out this spring and so her garden suddenly has more depth and is much more open now.

Riess: That's interesting. That must be in some of the old pictures.

Glasner: Well, it was probably appropriate for that particular time. But now with everything else large, those structures weren't needed any more so then you have to re-evaluate the garden. I think this is essentially one of the big things that is so essential in any garden is to every year or two, if someone with that kind of training can recognize what the intent of the garden is, to come in and structure the garden.

Riess: Right. And what is that kind of training?

Glasner: Well, you have to be aesthetically oriented as well as having an excellent idea of what horticulture is all about. Those two things have to go together. It isn't just horticulture and it isn't just aesthetic, it's both in a very intimate way, a marvelous thing. I think that's why Tommy enjoyed pruning so much; it's a very strong art form because it's what makes a garden happen. He and I would sometimes get into a garden and together we'd be there a good part of the day just whacking away. Boy, he'd be throwing that stuff.

Glasner: Of course, I had to do all the hauling, but I also did a lot of pruning with him which was fantastic! I loved it! Because you could just see the whole garden re-form.

I don't know of any other architect who even does this or could even do it because it takes both those histories, in horticulture and the aesthetic view. I don't know of any architect who could go into a garden and re-structure it. Of course Mai [Arbegast] could.

But speaking of Jean, I think she has a unique quality in the landscape industry and perhaps in this Sunset book [on the small garden] they'll capture some of it, because she's trying to instill in these younger people that gardening is very important. I guess really it is because if you think about the way that we live, most of us never touch the ground. We're completely isolated from the ground. In gardening you really get into the garden. That's where all of our strength comes from and Jean has this feeling. She always talks about herself as being an "old dirt gardener."

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Regional Oral History Office
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Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Jack Wagstaff

A SANTA CRUZ CAMPUS ARCHITECT DESCRIBES UCSC SITE PLANNING, 1962

Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

Obituaries

John E. Wagstaff

Santa Cruz

Memorial services for architect John E. Wagstaff will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at the University of California at Santa Cruz — the campus he helped design and build.

The services will be on the Stevenson College knoll with the Rev. Herb Schmidt officiating.

Mr. Wagstaff, 66, who supervised all design and construction on the 2000-acre campus between 1962 and 1975 when he retired, died August 11 at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco after a lengthy illness.

A native of San Francisco, he was graduated from Lowell High

School. In 1935 he was graduated from the Berkeley campus of UC and joined the firm of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons.

In 1940 Mr. Wagstaff joined the U.S. Public Housing Authority as a planner before being called to Navy duty on a minesweeper in the Pacific. He returned briefly to his government post after the war and in 1947 returned to California. Shortly thereafter he was named campus architect for the fast-growing UC Medical Center in San Francisco.

In recent years, he also served as a member of the Santa Cruz city Planning Commission.

A John E. Wagstaff Memorial Fund has been established in his honor. Contributions may be sent in care of fund chairman Harold A. Hyde to the UC Santa Cruz Foundation, Santa Cruz.

Our Correspondent

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Jack (John E.) Wagstaff

March 8, 1977

Interviewed in an office in The Bancroft Library, Berkeley

1) Old Friends

Riess: I have some notes from the Thomas Church office that say Mr. Church has known you for 30 years. Where did you meet?

Wagstaff: Actually it must be more like 40 years. I met him in 1938 when I worked for William Wilson Wurster, later of Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons (WB&E). This was shortly after I got out of school, and it was at Wurster's office on California Street. Tommy consulted, collaborated, with Bill on many of the houses. I was a junior staff person. Tommy was working directly with Bill, and was more senior staff people. But I got to see him and know him quite well in those days.

He always struck me as being an extremely young and vital person in every respect in those days. I have continued to have that feeling about him; [he has] a youthful feeling about him, regardless of his years. And he was always very witty and full of fun, that sort of thing.

Riess: Were there any other landscape architects around, on the Wurster office scene?

Wagstaff: My recollection of those times is pretty much limited to Tommy.

Riess: Were Wurster and Church thought of in tandem, as a team?

Wagstaff: Yes, at least through World War II. Bill Wurster almost invariably worked with Tommy in those days. Not so in more recent times. But apart from the fact that they sort of drifted apart on the professional side, they were always extremely close, and best friends, you know.

Riess: Why the drifting apart?

Wagstaff: I'm not exactly sure, might have been some personality problems in the picture--I've gotten that impression. Not with Bill, necessarily, but Tommy working with a bigger office. I sort of lost contact in those years but I noticed that Wurster's (WB&E's) office began to draw closer to Halprin's office. Then they got into a joint venture in buying the building that they're currently in. And in fact Halprin was a Church protege, as well--along with everybody else!

Riess: At the time that Tommy was working on the Santa Cruz Master Plan he was also working on the Master Plan for Berkeley.

Wagstaff: He was consulting landscape architect at Berkeley, too.

Riess: Were you connected with Berkeley?

Wagstaff: No. My contacts with Tommy were from the Wurster office in the late thirties and then again, when I was in the office, briefly, in the late forties, after World War II. Then we resumed a professional relationship when I was the campus architect at the San Francisco campus of the University. Tommy did several of the projects at San Francisco. I don't remember whether he was their consulting [landscape] architect, but he was involved on three or four important projects at San Francisco. That would be in the period of 1950 to 1960.

Riess: At what point did you go down to the new Santa Cruz Campus?

Wagstaff: I was the first one assigned to Santa Cruz, and I went down when the Regents were negotiating for the campus parcel, with the former owners. [The Cowell Foundation]

Riess: What sort of input did they have from landscape architects in choosing between the Almaden site and the Cowell property?

Wagstaff: I can't speak to that. There was a planning group appointed by the Regents to make a site study and recommend on site selection. Although it recommended the Almaden site to the Regents, Santa Cruz was one of the finalists. And then the Santa Cruz community made a very strong pitch to the Regents to come to Santa Cruz.

Bill Wurster and Professor Brown, [and Walter Horn?] and Professor [Stephen C.] Pepper from this campus made a presentation to the Regents urging that they give strong consideration to Santa Cruz; they stressed the aesthetic advantages. It was a strong push by those three distinguished Berkeley faculty members for Santa Cruz. Just what energized that effort, I don't know, but it

Wagstaff: was influential.* And then the Regents selected Santa Cruz. I think cost was involved too; they got more land for less money. Also, they didn't want to tangle with the Christian Brothers in Almaden Valley; they had had some unfortunate experiences with churches acquiring land in Berkeley.

I went down about April, 1961, and the chancellor was appointed about June.

Riess: There must have been a tremendous sense of this being a campus where everything could be done right.

Wagstaff: Yes, hopefully. It was a beautiful parcel of land.

And then the planning team was put together. Warnecke [John Carl Warnecke and Associates] was the nominal head of it, working with a group of other architects. Tommy was brought in as the consulting landscape architect.

Riess: How was he brought in?

Wagstaff: I think people sort of went to him almost naturally, felt that he was there and it better be Tommy Church, and no one else.

Just who did the arranging and put the team together I cannot quite remember. I don't think McHenry [Chancellor Dean E. McHenry] knew too much about Church at that time, but I certainly did, and all the principals in that planning/design consortium did. It might well have been a Regent or two; he was very close to some of the Regents, Regent [Elinor] Heller, for example.

Riess: And [Donald H.] McLaughlin?

Wagstaff: Yes, to be sure. I think it was more or less a foregone conclusion that it would be Church.

Riess: And Gerald Hagar.

Wagstaff: Yes. Many were clients of Tommy's, and Wurster's too.

Riess: That kind of network.

Wagstaff: I think so. I know Mrs. Heller was a client of both Tommy and Bill.

*Stephen C. Pepper, Art and Philosophy at the University of California, 1919 to 1962, Regional Cultural History Project, Berkeley, 1963, pp. 423-425.

Riess: It interests me that he would accept the job, since he avoided having a big office and a big operation.

Wagstaff: Well, this kind of involvement never meant bigness for Tommy. The consulting architect role meant that he was literally doing that, primarily consulting, he wasn't in a production situation, as a rule.

Riess: No drawings?

Wagstaff: Well, if he became the landscape architect for a given campus building project, yes he would do drawings then, with a small staff. He liked it that way. He never wanted to take on big jobs. He never had more than three or four people in the office.

2) Tommy and the Santa Cruz Site

Riess: What was Tommy's response to the site?

Wagstaff: Tommy always has been a kind of understated, underspoken sort of a guy, but he was very keen about the Santa Cruz site. He wrote a statement enclosed with a letter to me, back in 1963, I think, in which he expressed his thoughts about the site in a three or four page paper. I will get a copy of that.* We all thought so well of what he said that in the packet of program information and background that we've given to each of the executive architects thereafter we always included that rather profound statement by Tommy. In fact when we were discussing the master planning early on we thought so well of it that we had it presented to the Regents, and I believe they made it a matter of record. It was a sort of a simplified aesthetic charter for the campus, stressing the importance of the land, the site, the landscape qualities, and sort of downplaying architecture.

Riess: He wrote somewhere of the problem of building against the strong background of the redwoods, like building at the base of the Pinnacles. Has it been a problem for the architects?

Wagstaff: I don't think so. I think that Tommy's wonderful paper aside, any right-thinking good architect would deal with that site in a sympathetic and discrete way, you know, not abuse the trees, not get in with big bulldozing operations. And I think a lot of that was probably insured by the architects that were recommended and appointed. And Tommy would have a part in that, along with the

*See following.

625a

Suzanne Reis
THOMAS D. CHURCH AND ASSOCIATES
L A N D S C A P E A R C H I T E C T S
402 JACKSON STREET SAN FRANCISCO 11 DOUGLAS 2-8465

JUNE MEEHAN
JACK C. STAFFORD

Mr. J. E. Wagstaff
721 University Hall
University of California
Berkeley, Calif.

Re: Santa Cruz

Dear Jack:

The enclosed notes were written in the plane coming home. If it makes no sense, blame it on the 33,000 feet we had to fly to get over a storm.

I'm looking forward to our next meeting.

Sincerely,

Thomas
Thomas D. Church

TDC/hp

Encl: (1)
cc & encl to Mr. John Carl Warnecke

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625a

THOMAS D. CHURCH AND ASSOCIATES
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JUNE MEEHAN
JACK C. STAFFORD

10-29-62

University of California at Santa Cruz

Random Notes on the Site:

Among all the natural features which make the site both provocative and difficult, it is the size of the redwood groves which must concern us the most. These towers of trees are "out-scale" and more related to the rugged knolls and deep ravines than they are to an academic landscape. They are, therefore, to be thought of less as trees to enhance, screen and shelter buildings (although this they will do), but more as great vertical elements of the topography having form, mass and density against which to compose the architecture. The problem is more like building at the foot of cliffs or in the Pinnacles National Monument.

To accept them as trees in the normal building-landscape relationship would be a miscalculation of their potential in the grand design. Trees, as we have known them, are there in the oaks, madrones, pines and bays.

This influence of the great trees on the site plan and the architecture and the search for form to compliment them becomes an immediate challenge to the architects, for I know no past examples where a comparable site and program have been successfully

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University of California at Santa Cruz
Random Notes on the Site (continued)

solved. (The forest at Ankor Vat came after the fact). To be influenced by current examples of building in the Redwoods (the Sequoia cabin, the ski hut, Camp Curry, Bohemian Grove) might lead into pleasant but innocuous solutions suitable only for lesser and more sentimental projects.

Further, it is important to think clearly and with imagination before accepting the standards and cliches of modern monumental, or normal campus, building types. An architecture here must grow out of the problems, restrictions and potentialities of the site. Usual relationships of building groups in a formal pattern may violate the topography beyond repair. Grading and reforming of the land there will be, but kept to a minimum. Tree-clearing will be inevitable, not because the architecture forces it, but because the ultimate landscape demands it. There will be no indiscriminate removal of major redwood groves to accomodate preconceived architectural schemes. To a greater extent than any of us have faced heretofor, the buildings are less important in the visual composition than the trees. Instead of remaking the land, the land must remake our standard conceptions of building and plaza and parking lot.

The past is not without monumental examples of man having built with a full realization of the grandeur of his site and a knowledge of how to build to enhance or glorify it, as well as meet a specific program. The pyramids, the Greek temples, medieval castles, Tibetan monasteries and gothic spires attest to this.

10-29-62

University of California at Santa Cruz
Random Notes on the Site (continued)

Reverse examples are also plentiful. If the Victor Emanuel Monument is too obvious, consider the man who dared plunge the Campanile into the Piazza San Marco. Contrast the serenity of the domed cyclotron in the Berkeley hills to some of the more recent buildings being erected there. Look what happened to the Golden Triangle in Pittsburg -- one of the most talked of sites in the country ten years ago. How could anyone have crowded Wright's Museum into a block of dull buildings when light and air and trees were just across the street? The University of Mexico may be controversial but courage was not lacking.

It would be foolish and highly undesirable to think that a new startling architecture will appear here. Any attempt of a designer to compete in grandeur with this site is doomed to failure. Since the site is going to win, in any case, it's possible that the twin theories of delicate contrast and protective coloring are most likely to succeed. Hence color and texture will be as important as form. The strong horizontal, the dome, the gable may all find their place here. Bridges, wide cantilevers, sudden departures from the rectangular plan -- cliches on a flat site -- will become logical outgrowths of the siting problems.

It must be kept in mind, to avoid future recrimination, that one of the inevitable results of building in a forest is that as man enters, nature recedes. Romantics must be warned that covers of fern, johnny jump-ups and shooting stars prefer to disappear

10-29-62

University of California at Santa Cruz
Random Notes on the Site (continued)

rather than face our advanced civilization. With the exception of areas especially preserved in their natural state the general effect in the main campus areas must be one of sensitive collaboration between the designer and this spectacular environment with the intent that neither shall impose unduly upon the other. The wall to wall forest carpet will disappear and in its place must come -- not the asphalt jungle, not the standard campus we have always known, not an automobile under every redwood -- but a vast area in which to live and study. It must be magnificent in conception, daring and forthright in its architecture -- but gentle be the hand it lays upon the land.

TDC/hp

Wagstaff: chancellor and ourselves. He would be asked; you'd want to get his feeling. And I think in most cases he was sympathetic to the selections.

Riess: It sounds almost as if his say about the choice of architect was as important as his thoughts for the land.

Wagstaff: "His thoughts" put architecture in its proper place, vis-a-vis the amenities of the site. He was supportive in the appointment of good firms.

Riess: Did he have anything to do with siting the buildings then?

Wagstaff: Well, he was involved in a collaborative way in the overall planning of the campus itself, what would be located in which part of the campus. And that became the master plan, and a sort of general siting framework. Then Tommy did quite a good deal of tramping around the campus with us, by himself, and with others during that time, getting to learn the qualities of various areas of the central campus, getting the feeling of their size and their relationship to other areas, and so on.

The Santa Cruz campus is composed of a number of knolls, and arroyos, and then more knolls, and the buildable sites are in the minority, really, because the central part of the campus is so rugged. The sites had to be pretty carefully selected, and one knoll relating to the next, you know, and those knolls in turn related to the functions of what ever went on. I remember Tommy and I wandering around one foggy, wet day, and "discovering" the site where the Library was to be sited, for example. The Library site is on a small beautiful knoll within a bowl, surrounded by other knolls. And happily it was pretty close to the geographical center of the campus parcel.

Riess: You also had overviews to study.

Wagstaff: We had aerial topography and aerial photography, and from the aerial topography a very large model was built of the whole site, in the basement of Warnecke's office. I think its scale is 100 feet to the inch, quite large. We would jokingly say it was almost like being down on the campus, to work with this big model. It was an excellent planning tool. It's down on the campus now, mounted vertically in one of the old farm buildings.

The charge to the planning group from the Regents at that time was that Santa Cruz was to be a very large campus. I think the total number of the students was to be 27,500, by 1990, which shocked everybody. But the site at first was at least realistically

Wagstaff: considered with that long-range potential in mind. So what we were dealing with in the early planning was not so much individual building project sites, but the central Library here, the humanities there, the arts here, the colleges there, and so on.

Riess: The estimated population has been revised downward?

Wagstaff: The charge by the Regents, to my knowledge, has not been changed, but things have happened since then in terms of the flattening enrollment curve--the University just stopped growing in terms of enrollments, and that meant that facilities stopped growing. For Santa Cruz, the campus planners now see a plateau of about 6,500 students for maybe ten years or so more. The planners now are dealing with that as the short range problem, still considering the needs for future longer range planning.

But neither the campus nor the Regents have addressed themselves to a new interim plan. In my opinion that still has to be dealt with.

Even in the early days, those of us--this would include Tommy--those of us who got the feeling for the fragile quality of the Santa Cruz site regretted the large number of students originally anticipated. The chancellor, for instance, said, "Gee, we'd be much more comfortable with an ultimate target of 10 or 15,000." We all would have been and still would be, I'm sure.

Riess: What actual guarantee is there that areas at Santa Cruz like the meadow will be left untouched?

Wagstaff: Tommy was one who was very vocal on these points; he was one who said that great central meadow should be left basically untouched. But how do you insure it? Well, it's set forth as a requirement of the original long range development plan, and the Regents have accepted that and approved that principle, and I think it becomes a kind of a charter for the campus to follow.

Riess: But on the Berkeley campus I get the feeling that those open spaces have been encroached on in places.

Wagstaff: On the Berkeley campus some of the things got out of hand for a while, certain areas on the campus that shouldn't have been developed. But then due in part to Louis DeMonte and to Tommy, and Bill Wurster, they backed off and cleared out. Buildings were taken out and they recreated Strawberry Canyon, and the greenbelt through the campus.

I hope they won't have to do much reversing at Santa Cruz. One of the problems at Santa Cruz is that a lot of the stuff that was set down as objectives in the long range development plan, as

Wagstaff: worthy goals, you know, have not in all cases been lived up to. I'm speaking of what do you do about the automobile. There was a wish expressed in the long range development plan that large parking areas be kept at some distance from the center of the campus. That is being constantly eroded and no one in the administration seems to have the muscle to deal with that. What do we do as more and more people want to park? That could be disastrous to the center of the campus.

Riess: Even with the small population?

Wagstaff: Yes, in a way because we're not quite large enough to justify parking structures. Parking structures could accumulate a lot of parking less obtrusively at appropriate locations. One such project was funded, but for environmental and fiscal and other reasons, we never did build it.

We have a constant tug and pull between a faction on campus that wants to drive right to their office doors, so to speak, and another faction who would keep the auto at bay.

Riess: I thought the Santa Cruz ethic was such that a little walk would be in order.

Wagstaff: That's the rhetoric in the plan, but when the shoe comes to pinch Professor So-and-so...

This was managed in a nice way up until recently by a parking, circulation and transit committee on the campus, incorporating various viewpoints. But we've gone through three chancellors here recently, and some of these things kind of went into limbo.

Riess: Where did the planning committee meet? And was Tommy always present?

Wagstaff: Some of the early campus planning committee meetings were held in San Francisco at the medical center, one or two at Berkeley, one at the San Francisco airport. Tommy was at all of them.

Riess: Was he mostly listening, or talking?

Wagstaff: Well, Tommy is an excellent listener, and not too much of a talker, but when he had something to say it would be pretty important.

3) Choosing the Architects

Riess: Did he offer comments on things other than the land?

Wagstaff: He'd express opinions pro and con on an item of architecture, because he was one of a committee that approved designs. His influence, and ours too, in a way, would occur a little earlier, in the selection of the firms that did the design, because we were all familiar with the quality of their work. In terms of architecture that would be 85 percent of the battle; if you had a good architectural firm appointed whose work was known and was compatible with the special needs of the Santa Cruz campus, this would be a large part of the battle.

Riess: I have a list of the architects for the colleges. But how were the landscape architects chosen?

Wagstaff: Usually at the time the architect was being considered for selection we would know who their landscaping consultants normally were. Because any architect, in order to perform his function best, has to work with consultants that he feels compatibility with, particularly the landscape architect. So usually the architect hired would suggest who his landscape architect associate was, since he would be the one who would work with him. Thus, when the architect was considered for appointment, his team of consultants were also considered. Some of the architects routinely worked with Halprin, and Halprin was their landscape architect; and one or two of them asked Tommy to do the landscape architecture on the project. For example on the Library.

Riess: [Looking at the Santa Cruz "Long Range Development Plan," 1971, p.48] Were all the architects from California?

Wagstaff: Except for Ralph Rapson from Minneapolis, and Hugh Stubbins from Boston.

Riess: How did they get hired?

Wagstaff: The Regents lifted a ban on the use of out of state architects. I thing Regent Roth was interested in doing that for some reason. We were the first campus to take them up on that proviso, and scouted around for outside architects. The nomination of Hugh Stubbins was made by Ernie Kump, who had become the on-going consulting architect for the campus. And Tommy knew Stubbins and had worked for him in the past. Ralph Rapson was selected because of the quality of his work and because he had done theater work. Tommy served as landscape

Wagstaff: architect for both Stubbins and Rapson. The landscape firm for Applied Sciences was a younger firm, Guzzardo. Central Services was Halprin. Classroom Unit I: Marquis and Stoller, Eckbo, landscape. College V: Stubbins worked with Church. McCue and Associates for College VII had Royston. Communications Building was Roy Rydell of Santa Cruz, who was a friend of Church's. On Cowell College, Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, worked with Halprin. Cowell Health Center: John Funk was the architect and Royston was the landscape architect. Crown College: Kump & Associates was architect, Halprin was the landscape architect. The Field House: Callister, Payne and Rosse, architect, no landscape architect appointed for that building.

Kresge College: Moore and Turnbull, architects, the landscape architect was Dan Kiley. Kiley was nominated by architect Chuck Moore and he was a good friend of Tommy's. (Mai Arbegast served as landscape consultant later.) Merrill College: Campbell and Wong was architect, with Royston doing the landscaping. Natural Sciences Unit 1 and 2: Anshen and Allen were architects, and Doug Baylis was their landscape architect.

Riess: All the familiar names.

Wagstaff: Performing Arts: Rapson, and Church was the landscape architect. Rapson specifically asked that he do it; they're good friends. Germano Milono was the architect for the Social Sciences Unit I. He has the offices upstairs from Tommy [on Jackson Street, San Francisco]. He was nominated to be architect by Tommy. Tommy was the landscape architect for that building and did a beautiful job on it. Stevenson College: Joe Esherick was the architect and Halprin was landscape architect. Student Apartments: Ratcliff was the architect, and University House also Ratcliff. Ratcliff's landscape architect was [Allen] Ribera and [John] Sue. University Library: Warnecke architect, Church landscape architect. These firms were all very friendly with Church. They were all known to Church, good friends, compatible in their interest. Many were his protégés.

By the way, I should interject that Michael Painter, who had been in Warnecke's office as an associate and then became a landscape consultant on his own, was much involved in the University Library, Warnecke wanted to work with this man (Painter) that he was involved with. Tommy was particularly sympathetic to that, because of all the young landscape architects, I believe Michael Painter is one of those he admires most. He's the one, by the way, who did the Kennedy grave, in Arlington.

In all cases that I've listed, Tommy would review the landscape design, in fact they would beat a path to his door.

4) Tommy's Ways of Working

Riess: He must have been able to deal with things quickly and directly.

Wagstaff: Very quickly and directly and subtly. He was an excellent designer, and very modest in the way he put things forward, but he would sometimes make a sketch and say, "Have you thought of trying this?" Or, "Maybe this would be an interesting possibility too." And boy, they'd usually glom onto it. And he would take a rather back seat on architecture, just saying whether he liked it or didn't like it, but he would speak right up on the landscape architecture.

Incidentally--and Louis DeMonte probably told you the same thing--unlike some of the other landscape architects who are on this list, and are quite good, Tommy would be less apt to impose non-natural forms--walls, involved geometric forms, etc. He tends to deal pretty much in plants. He sort of glorifies the part of plants in landscape architecture, which some landscape architects do not. Have you heard that?

Riess: Yes. I guess Santa Cruz called for glorifying the plants. But were walls used much?

Wagstaff: Retaining walls, and steps, and formal things, like fountains, they are there. But there is nothing like the West Gate on the Berkeley Campus, or various and sundry sculptured landscaping that you see on that campus. You don't have that at Santa Cruz. There are one or two discrete places where somebody did a small fountain.

Riess: Was this a design philosophy?

Wagstaff: No, I just think this is what architects in the Bay Area see in Tommy; in his landscaping the use of plants is important. With some other landscape architects, contrived forms and geometric forms, and the walls that they build, tend to become important--Tommy's work, let's say, would be more informal, as a rule. Having said that, I know there are all kinds of houses that he did where the gardens are just super formal, but he understands the importance of plants. He's very much of a gardener-with-his-hands type of guy. Did anybody ever tell you about his walking around with his gardening shears?

Riess: Yes, indeed. So, in a place where the landscape was splendid already, ideally you put in the building and then just pat down the dirt and hope it goes back to what it was?

Wagstaff: As a matter of fact the landscape architect from New England that Moore and Turnbull wanted to use (Kiley), the friend of Tommy's, said that the criterion for him was that a landscape architect had been successful if you didn't perceive that a landscape architect had been involved. He put it just precisely that way.

Another thing I want to mention about Tommy: when he retired as landscape architect for Berkeley I was concerned, I thought he was pulling in his horns and was going to retire from Santa Cruz too. And I wrote him a personal note saying that we'd enjoyed working with him and that, as an old Berkeley alumni, I was sorry he had left Berkeley, and please, I hoped he wouldn't resign from Santa Cruz. He wrote me a very nice letter back saying in sum that he appreciated what I had asked him and stated, "I'll stay at Santa Cruz til I drop."

Then when he became ill and couldn't get around quite as handily (this was about the time that Mark [N.] Christensen became chancellor at Santa Cruz), there was an exchange of correspondence about whether we should have him as an ongoing member of the campus planning committee. And the chancellor asked me to deal with Tommy on this because they were anxious to hear; the chancellor was setting up a new committee.

So I talked to Grace Hall [Thomas Church's secretary] and she thought he'd be very pleased to continue to be the consulting landscape architect, but he probably couldn't cover all the meetings, so it would involve our coming to see him. The chancellor wrote a letter back, saying that we were delighted about that and we wanted him to stay as long as he wished to.

Then when Angus Taylor took over, the campus planning committee as such went out of business, and they had another committee, a rose by a different name, that does more planning of a day-to-day, managerial, housekeeping type of thing, because they're not building now.

I'm sure if they should have a design problem that involved an over-shoulder look by the consulting landscape architect, they'd go up to Tommy's office and get that. At more recent campus planning meetings--they became less frequent--someone, maybe Betsy, would drive Tommy down.

Riess: Is there a resident landscape architect?

Wagstaff: Not now.

Riess: Was there ever?

Wagstaff: Yes, a man named Harry Tsugawa, who worked on the campus staff.

Riess: I'm interested in how Halprin, who I think of working mostly with materials and structures, how his designs for your campus were.

Wagstaff: They were very good designs. He's kind of drifted off to macro-landscaping, cities, environment, all that latterly. But he had a marvelous staff, and he had an excellent associate named Walton who was the expert on the staff on plants, and she was very much in the picture on Santa Cruz projects. I felt that the Halprin designs were more sympathetic to Tommy's basic ideas than some of the others, as a matter of fact.

Riess: Is there any landscape architect who could have done for Santa Cruz what Church did?

Wagstaff: Probably not. Doug Baylis could have come close--possibly Halprin--and Painter, whose work Tommy admires.

Tommy also--this is jumping around now--but in the very beginning the issue was whether the campus was going to be located in the forest, which it is, in the center of the parcel, or down near High Street, which had been the original concept when the parcel of land was acquired. Tommy was one of those who urged that it be located where it was. And one of the arguments was that we have "instant landscaping" there, all these great trees in existence that appear around the Library, for instance, which on the Berkeley campus would have to have been maybe 75 or 80 years old. There are redwood trees almost that big now on the Berkeley campus. He felt there was an aesthetic advantage (and a dollar value) to that, which you could only deal with subjectively, but he felt it was an important point and he made that point to the Regents.

Another thing was the roads: the University was extremely fortunate in having the services of a man who is an engineer for Kennedy Engineers, a firm in San Francisco which deals with such things as utilities and site development (sewers, water, roads, etc.). That effort was directed in the Kennedy Engineers staff by Jim Mahood. Jim, although a civil engineer, is a very sensitive guy. He and Tommy hit it off just beautifully, and he is a great admirer of Tommy, and although he's an engineer, in his drawings he'd do his best to indicate trees and indicate foliage. So we used to kid him and say that he had become kind of a landscape associate of Tommy's. They hit it off just great.

It's interesting that even though the site was difficult at Santa Cruz, and we had these long access roads to get into the place, our site development costs were less than the site development costs at the Irvine campus.

Riess: Haven't the roads been a problem at Santa Cruz?

Wagstaff: Well, when we first went down we were told 27,500 students, and we were working in a day when the automobile was in a lot stronger position in one's thinking. Warnecke's transportation consultants were pretty automobile-oriented, in spite of Jack Warnecke's saying, "Think of something else besides the automobile." However their drawings show future four lane roads into the campus. But after we got started, five or six years after, we managed to put forward the notion, and I think it was dealt with formally by the campus planning committee, that there'd never be roads more than two lanes wide on the Santa Cruz campus. And no one can see any real need for more.

The debate about access roads to the campus, how wide they should be and even if they should be built, gets into politics between the Cowell Foundation, who still own lands around the campus, and the city, and the county. This is still to be resolved.

There is pressure to build an east access to the campus to get traffic out of the city; the city wants that, and the county has a compact with the University to build these roads, and they don't want to build it, of course. The honeymoon's over and they don't want to build anymore if they can avoid it. Fortunately, the need is not yet great.

Riess: I know that you have a meeting to go to now, Mr. Wagstaff. But, before you leave, let me ask you about the "vertical architectural symbol" that I've seen reference to.

Wagstaff: Well, I think Warnecke kind of visualized one. And Tommy repeatedly would say, "If there's anything that this campus doesn't need, it's a Campanile." And I can remember--as a matter of fact, the hole's probably still in the model--there was a big dowel that came up, and this was a representation of the tower. Tommy himself went and pulled it out, and I've never seen it since. [Laughter]

How did you hear about the tower?

Riess: It is mentioned here, Long Range Development Plan, September 1963, p. 29, "At its northern end, on a dominating knoll that overlooks the park, will be located a vertical architectural symbol--a great tower--which, rising through the trees, will provide orientation within the campus and identification from without."

Wagstaff: That's long forgotten, thank goodness.

Wagstaff: Incidentally, the founding chancellor, Dean McHenry, was very well-disposed to Church, and he was beholden to Tommy's thoughts. We all were, but particularly the chancellor. And this was very helpful to Tommy. "What does Tommy think of it?" And Tommy was always sort of a benign guy who was around to make sure you didn't do some horrible disservice to the campus, but pretty understated all the time.

Another thing that is wonderful about Tommy is that he doesn't have any "sacred cows." He would see good in practically everybody's work. He wouldn't be hypercritical; some guy wanted to do it a certain way, he would see the good side of it and develop that, rather than say, "scrap it." And he didn't always work with architects, exclusively, either; he worked with Cliff May, who's a designer in Los Angeles. Some landscape architects wouldn't soil their hands working closely with a non-architect, but not Tommy. There were no mutual admiration societies for Tommy.

Riess: As you look back at what Tommy did for the Santa Cruz campus, do you think he did best at the large-scale, long-range, or will it be the design work on the individual buildings that will last?

Wagstaff: His large-scale, long-range planning will, hopefully, have the greatest long-range impact.

Riess: Frederick Law Olmsted has had a permanent impact on the Stanford campus, and it is still his plan they really work with. Has Tommy's work at Santa Cruz that indelible stamp? Does it have that much shape and strength?

Wagstaff: The answer to both questions is "no." However, for the distinctive and beautiful environment--when you speak of Olmsted's "indelible stamp" and "impact," you may refer to form-giving. Tommy's paper adequately stressed the fact that nature formed and stamped Santa Cruz. Tommy would enhance the legacy rather than alter it.

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University of California  
Berkeley, California

Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Harry Sanders

A STANFORD PLANNER CHARTS THE HISTORY OF CAMPUS  
PLANNING, AND CHURCH'S CONTRIBUTION

Interview Conducted by  
Suzanne B. Riess



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Harry Sanders

May 24, 1977

Interviewed at Stanford University's Facilities-Planning Office

# 1) The Need for an Advisory Council

Sanders: This is the room in which Thomas Church has been the landscape consultant for Stanford since about 1960. He also has done about two-thirds of the executive landscape work on campus both before 1960 and up to the present time.

And he also has been the consultant to the University; and a member of the Architectural Advisory Council, which was formed in 1960 by Stanford's then President Wallace Sterling.

Riess: Was that the first time you'd had that kind of a major planning group?

Sanders: Yes, and the reason for the committee to be appointed is that I had been brought here to build up the office to get ready for the Pace Campaign in which we were trying to raise a 100 million dollars. The Ford Foundation offered to give Stanford 25 million dollars if Stanford could match it 3 to 1, in other words if Stanford could raise 75 million.

Most of that money went into buildings and physical plant, bricks and mortar. So the Trustees felt, and I certainly agreed with them, in fact I was part of the suggestion, that for continuity's sake we needed a group of outside architects who were not as close as we were in the office here, who would review every plan and every thought, every idea and give us their advice.

This was an informal group; it was advisory to me as the Director of Planning or to the Office of the Director of Planning. We met usually once a month or sometimes once every other month. We reviewed every plan of every building, every landscape plan, every parking lot, every road layout with this group.



Sanders: The original group consisted of Church, a landscape architect, and three architects. The original three architects were Gardner Dailey, Milton Pflueger, and John Carl Warnecke. These three architects were responsible for many of the buildings on campus. Later on Ernest Kump was added to the group and then Dailey died, so it became a group of four again.

The last thing I did in December, 1975, before retiring, was to add five new names to the group. The old group, for one reason or another, needed new life. Mr. Pflueger was in his 80s; Warnecke was often in Washington or elsewhere; Mr. Church was beginning to go down in health, unfortunately; Kump was local in Palo Alto, and the only one who really was very active. So we added new names to this group.

Church played a fantastic role in this group. He also was kind of my confidante. He was a person I knew well enough so that I could call him at any time, get his opinion on architects or other landscape architects, get his opinion on designs, and didn't have to go through channels.

Riess: How was that group selected?

Sanders: The group was selected by Dr. Sterling and myself. We put together the three architects who had done a lot of work at Stanford, Dailey, Pflueger, and Warnecke, and Church for the landscape, the landscape being as important, if not more important, than the new buildings.

Riess: Church was often influential in pulling in the architects. People would ask his advice on architecture, too. Did he have that role here, too?

Sanders: In my opinion, and I think everyone in this Planning office would agree, and I think the administrators and the Trustees would agree, Church is one of the finest architectural critics in the United States.

We called on him, and this was a friendly group--these four or five. We purposely kept it informal. We met in this room. They never met with anyone except members of my staff (if I called them in), myself, and other architects or landscape architects--in other words, professionals. I didn't want to get it so big that we had committee upon committee upon committee. I didn't want people from other University offices, and I didn't want the people who were going to live in the buildings even to be in at these meetings. So that if Church thought Warnecke's design wasn't good or Warnecke thought Church's design wasn't good, they said so frankly. They got along beautifully. It was a remarkable group.

Riess: Then you would make the presentations to the Trustees?

Sanders: After this advisory committee was satisfied with the design, and after it had been reviewed with them, if they had suggestions then it went back to the architects. They were sent directly to the architects.

There was one case of a building on campus that we were not satisfied with. I fought it, Church fought it, the Advisory Council fought it, and we went back to the architects three times, met in their office in San Francisco, and certain modifications were made, but we really lost the battle in that particular case. It's a long story, I won't go into all the details, but then it went to the Trustees and I reported to the Trustees what had been the criticism, and it was finally passed, but after several tries and much grumbling. It wasn't that I was trying to put it over the Trustees. I was trying to get their support and had their support.

Another point of Church--I'm just rambling, telling you about a few things that I didn't agree with--

Riess: Yes, the reason I interjected that is because I'm not sure which parts of the planning committee report to the Berkeley Regents. You're saying that the Advisory Council didn't go directly to the Trustees or wouldn't have testified?

Sanders: Church was the first non-staff professional person, landscape architect or architect, ever to meet with the Board of Trustees on a job. This is when he presented the long-range campus landscape master plan to the Board of Trustees. I felt it was so important for the board to hear it from Church alone, I felt that I would be insufficient in trying to present Church's plan to them. It was too important, too all-encompassing.

Riess: Was he eloquent in that kind of a situation?

Sanders: I wouldn't use the word "eloquent" because I think he's such a simple, down-to-earth person, but he reeks of sincerity. I think if Church told you it was going to snow at 11 o'clock this morning, you'd look out and expect it to snow. The Trustees had that much faith in him. I think if Church said something, they felt it was apt to be true. Plus a lot of the Trustees had worked with him in their individual homes, had worked with him in their industrial plants or factories or businesses or what not. He was, as I said, the first "outside" person ever to meet with the Trustees.

Sanders: Since then on two or three occasions I have had architects come to meet with the Trustees--not on the first round of design, but if there were questions that I felt I couldn't answer. Like when the main library was being designed 12 years ago. (This is not the library that's now being built, but a previous design for this addition to the library was being designed and questions came up that I felt the architect should answer.) The Trustees talked to the architect directly and asked him to make a seismic study for earthquakes and a financial study to see if there was another type building that he could do for less money. Both questions, the answer was "No." All agreed the building was fine, but that building then sat on the shelf for so long while Stanford was trying to raise funds that eventually it had to be scrapped and we built a much smaller building, same architect.

I came here in January 1956 and at that point Stanford had built a lot of new dormitories immediately after World War II because the enrollment had doubled after the war ended and the students simply had to have a place to live. There had been a lot of scientific discoveries, inventions, and a lot of scientific buildings had been built, some almost jerry-built. You know, the kind that if you get \$50,000 you add a wing to a building, that type of thing.

## 2) Frederick Law Olmsted at Stanford

Sanders: When Church took over as landscape consultant to Stanford, we were left with the original quadrangle, which I think is one of the greatest pieces of University architecture in the country. In 1956 it wasn't recognized anything like as much as it is now. But the surroundings on three sides were really backyard junk. There were temporary buildings. There were some good buildings, too, that had been built after World War I, between World War I and World War II. But it was a mish-mash. There was a wall behind the geology corner, which I'll point out in a minute to you, that was about oh, it must have been 18 feet high. It was a Chinese wall. It just kept the quadrangle from being a part of an expanding campus.

The problem was to not change the character of Stanford because the early Stanford students, the alumni, we all felt that the quadrangle was great; it should be maintained. Nobody wanted to change the character. In fact, everybody wanted it to remain quote "the farm" unquote. But we realized that in order to expand into new libraries and new science buildings, new physics buildings, and a new student center and so on, you couldn't have people climbing up an 18 foot wall. There were also areas that were really just dejected; they were junky.

Sanders: So Church came along and I would say he had more influence in creating the Stanford campus as it is today than any other single person next to Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed it in the very beginning.

Riess: Yes, I wanted to ask about that tradition. How much of a long range plan had Olmsted conceived of?

Sanders: Well, fortunately I can show you right here. This is Olmsted's plan of 1882, I think, or 1883. You'll notice that Palm Drive came in from El Camino Real and terminated in the oval, which remains. This was the original quadrangle which was built and which is really virtually untouched today. Olmsted originally planned for campus residences to go off in this tangent [points out areas as he talks]. The reservoirs--Lake Lagunita is still there. These homes were built.

He also planned six additional quadrangles, all in a straight row, three on either side of the original. I'm glad they weren't built. Unfortunately, instead of having quadrangles with the arcades in the front and rear, he was going to divide each of these quadrangles up so there would be large single family Romanesque stone homes for senior faculty along the front of each quadrangle here, here, here, here, here, and here. And small lots and homes at the back so that actually you would have seen the homes, not the quadrangles. We have photographs of this in the office. It wouldn't have been anything like the quality of this quad which was built.

Riess: It's extraordinarily linear, Isn't it unusual?

Sanders: A straight line, yes. Yes, I think it would have been most unfortunate. He also had faculty homes radiating out in this direction, this direction, this direction. But he left this all in open space, the arboretum, all of this. So he left lots of open space, which is highly commendable.

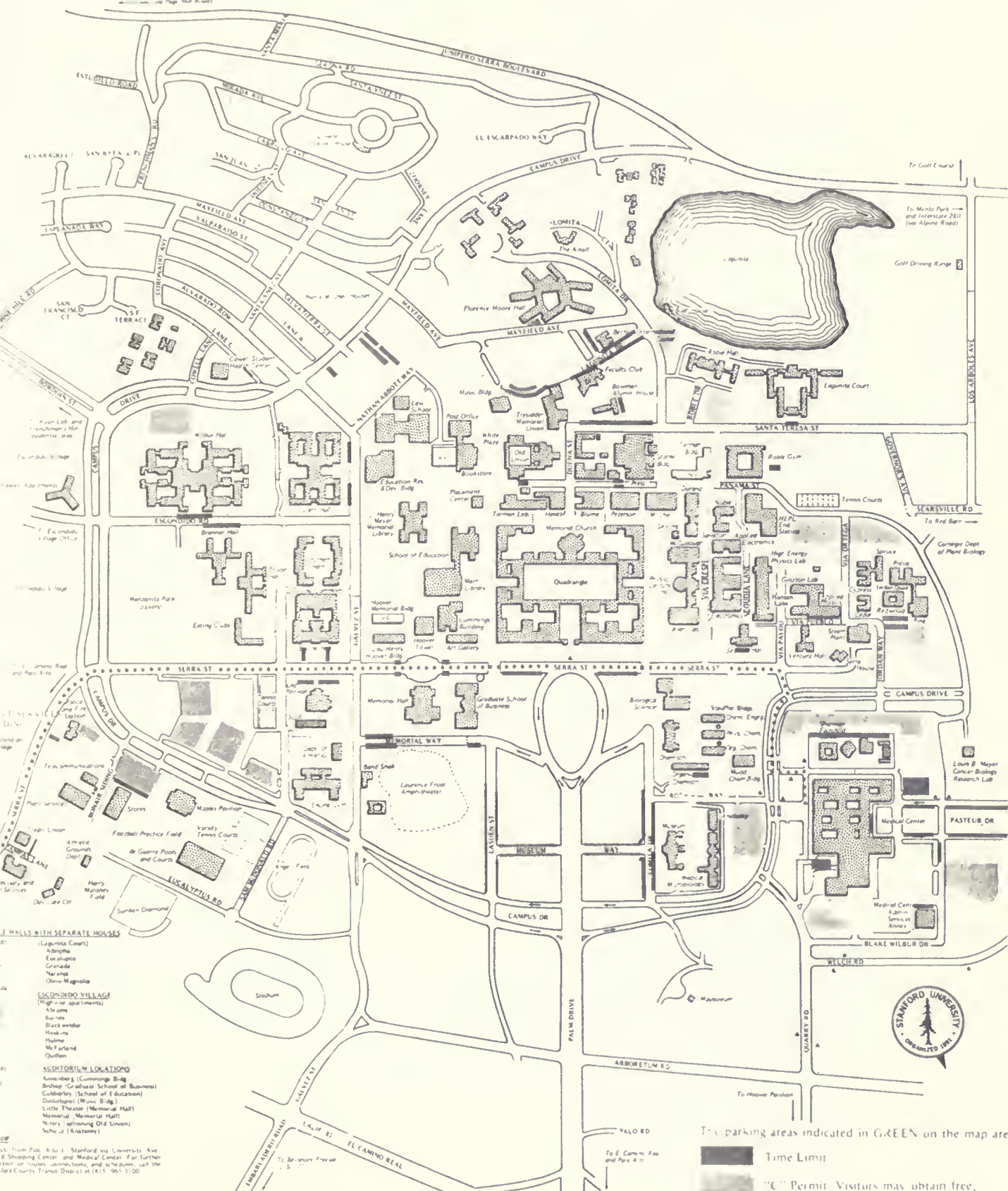
Now we took the liberty of putting the red on his plan to show that we still have a peripheral road which is virtually our Campus Drive. You probably came in and saw Campus Drive today. Campus Drive is virtually the Olmsted design which is shown here on red. So this adjacent quadrangle has not been developed exactly as Olmsted wished it, but I think the character of it is developing today so that Olmsted would have approved.

We call this the Library Quad: it's the Hoover Tower, the Main Library, the three Hoover buildings, then the Meyer Undergraduate Library. This over here became the Science Quad, with physics and engineering. So basically we in this office, and I think particularly Thomas Church, have tried very hard to keep the character of the way Olmsted originally designed the campus.



STANFORD UNIVERSITY

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## THE COMMITTEE FOR ART AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

STANFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART

STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305

## THOMAS CHURCH'S LANDSCAPE DESIGNS ON STANFORD CAMPUS

|      |                                                                        |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1959 | Medical Center (includes fountain)                                     |
| 1959 | Married Student Housing I (Escondido Village closest to Stanford Ave.) |
| 1959 | The John Stauffer Chemistry Building                                   |
| 1959 | Stanford Bookstore                                                     |
| 1959 | Post Office                                                            |
| 1961 | Chemistry Quad                                                         |
| 1962 | Tresidder Memorial Union                                               |
| 1962 | Stanford Press Expansion                                               |
| 1963 | Lomita Mall                                                            |
| 1963 | Chemistry Conference Building                                          |
| 1964 | White Memorial Plaza                                                   |
| 1964 | Kiosks                                                                 |
| 1964 | Alfred P. Sloan Math Center                                            |
| 1964 | Storke Student Publications Building                                   |
| 1964 | Laurence Frost Amphitheater                                            |
| 1965 | Faculty Club                                                           |
| 1965 | Cowell Student Health Center                                           |
| 1965 | Jack McCullough Building                                               |
| 1965 | Herrin Biology Building                                                |
| 1965 | President's House Terrace (section toward campus)                      |
| 1966 | J. Henry Meyer Memorial Library                                        |
| 1966 | Landscape Master Plan, Central Campus                                  |
| 1966 | Graduate School of Business                                            |
| 1966 | Jos. D. Grant Building for Research in Clinical Science                |
| 1966 | John Stauffer Chemistry Engineering                                    |
| 1967 | Lou Henry Hoover Building                                              |
| 1967 | Bowman Alumni House                                                    |
| 1967 | Student Services (Old Union)                                           |
| 1967 | William F. Herrin Labs                                                 |
| 1968 | Lomita Mall (includes Keith Memorial behind Memorial Church)           |
| 1968 | Undergraduate Housing, Cluster 3                                       |
| 1969 | William F. Durand and Hugh Skillings Building                          |
| 1969 | William F. Durand and Hugh Skillings Building                          |
| 1969 | Food Research Institute                                                |
| 1969 | Nathan Cummings Art Building                                           |
| 197  | Ruth Wattis Mitchell Earth Sciences Building                           |
| 197  | Jordan Hall                                                            |
| 197  | Dinkelspiel Auditorium                                                 |

Riess: How did Church respond to that plan? Do you remember?

Sanders: I think he responded to the plan by doing to it what Olmsted would have done himself had he lived long enough and been given the University's new requirements.

Riess: Do you remember any sense of surprise looking at it? Because in a way it is beautiful and it makes sense, and yet there's something so rigid about it.

Sanders: Well, as far as I can really remember that, I think Church would have agreed completely on what you and I have just said. It is too rigid.

You see what happened, originally Senator and Mrs. Stanford had planned to build the campus up in the foothills. So it would have been back really off of this map here. It would have been back in the rolling hills. Then Olmsted came along and found what the cost of building in the foothills would be--first of all, I think Olmsted was a very formal person, Beaux Art, and I think he liked the formal approach, symmetrical and everything, and I don't think he wanted to build in the foothills. But secondly, they found that the cost of building in the foothills would have added X percent, probably up as much as 15, 20 percent.

So this site for the quadrangle was selected, the reason being given that this is where young Leland Stanford, Jr. used to play a great deal when he was a child. (And of course the whole University was given in his memory. That was the Stanfords' only child. When he died, they gave this enormous wealth to start a private university in the west, which they said was for our children, the children of California. Wonderful idea, wonderful thought.)

### 3) Major Achievements--Quad, Plazas, Malls

Sanders: Well, in the front of the quadrangle the buildings are all built perfectly level. There's enough slope here so that the front had steps, I suppose 8 or 9 or 10 feet of steps going up to the front of the quadrangle in these buildings here. By the time you got to the back of the quad, they had dug into the hill. This is what caused this 18 foot wall behind the geology building.

Riess: Was it a natural wall or a structural wall?



Sanders: Stone and concrete structural wall. Actually this geology building, this building right here, had a wall, and then there was a wall that went all the way across the back of the quad. It tapered down as it got back to the southeast corner because there wasn't as much grade.

Church came along and among the things that he did was to create a beautiful informal plaza here out of a 5-acre area full of absolute junk and trash, old streets, old telephone poles, old parking lots, old temporary buildings. These 5 acres here are called the White Memorial Plaza. This is a bookstore, the post office, the music building, the student center.

And as he began, and we were with him, and I talked to him on the subject, we realized that we wanted to get away from the gridiron rigidity of the buildings that had been built here and here. We felt that as we went back towards the foothills in this beautiful piece of land, the informal oak trees and other landscaped areas, too, that we wanted to get away from rigidity. We did not want a gridiron pattern all over the place. So you can see that the buildings began to be placed informally.

Riess: And did he site those buildings then?

Sanders: He had a great deal to do with the siting of them, yes. Later on he had practically everything to do with the siting of them, as he got into this plan over here. This is the faculty club where we're going for lunch today, this is the alumni building. So these three buildings--the student center, the faculty club, the alumni house--share the same oak grove, which is one of the handsomest pieces of landscape on the campus.

Riess: That had been there, of course.

Sanders: Yes, the trees had been there.

Riess: Was this a rising topography?

Sanders: [Looking at White Plaza] Yes, right here. It used to be a bunch of steps and walls and straight sidewalks. But all of that was changed. Yet the character is very much an Olmsted type of character. Because in addition to some of his rigid plans, such as this, Olmsted loved the English garden and the English landscape and English terrace. This is formal and yet it's not rigid. There's a formal fountain here and then the big water feature here. We had a competition of j.g. magnitude with local artists to design something to go into the fountain. Aristides Demetrios won the competition and I think did a very handsome piece of sculpture in the middle of the fountain. Church designed the fountain and Church really designed this whole area.



Sanders: Now behind the quad, this is the church, of course, and originally the arcade had gone all the way across here. This part of the arcade collapsed in 1906 in the earthquake and never was rebuilt. But behind here, there was straight sidewalks, there was a straight wall, there was a straight road, straight rows of trees and shrubs. It was about as dull and unattractive a place as you ever saw and yet these laboratory buildings were sandstone and handsome in their way. It really became quite a nice first line of defense, as we called it, to the quadrangle.

Riess: You mean once they were visible?

Sanders: Yes. So Church came along, took the wall out, put this area into banks, planted it, got rid of the straight lines, got rid of the road, and now this is a very attractive south arcade to the quadrangle. Over here [to the west] there was a road; it was parked with cars day and night. It was just a street, sidewalks on each side.

Riess: Let me see, "here" is what direction?

Sanders: This would be to the west. Unfortunately at Stanford since the beginning we have taken poetic license and every map is oriented with north straight down. As you well know, north should be straight up. Actually, Governor's Lane, this great row of eucalyptus, is built on a north south axis so north is straight down, south is straight up on this angle.

But when Church started in this area of Lomita, these buildings had been built, designed by Gardner Dailey, and they just sat there, and you could hardly see them or get to them. Church created what is called Lomita Mall which tied Dailey's buildings to the quadrangle.

Riess: Gardner Dailey designed buildings for the campus back in the days when Church was executive landscape architect?

Sanders: He was a consultant, yes. These Dailey buildings were built in the late fifties and Church's role as consultant had really not taken on a very important role. Church was the landscape architect for those buildings that Gardner Dailey designed. Then about that time the Trustees and our office realized that the siting of new buildings was becoming so very important.

You see, each head of each department usually wants to site his building where he wants it. He's a king in his own domain. We had a real battle royal with the law school on one occasion because the law school wanted to be here. And the law school is here. They won the fight. It was not where this office and many others wanted it.

Sanders: We felt that the graduate school--and here's the graduate school of business here, for instance, here's the medical school here--we felt that a graduate school shouldn't be in the heart of the undergraduate student part of the campus, the post office, bookstore, the student union, and so on. But the new law dean wanted it there, and that is where the law school is.

So Church was hired on a special contract to prepare a long-range master plan for the campus. This is the original plan which he prepared. Now since this has been prepared there have been a number of changes made. These buildings have not been built. This is in a different format from what this is here. But Church, recognizing the importance of the Lomita Mall, this is what he created out of just a plain old street. And when the art building was built, he began the improvements on the Lasuen Mall. He has not completed this.

He also was very influential in closing off streets. We used to just have traffic running through here back and forth all day. We wanted to create the importance of Campus Drive, a peripheral road, which we did. In the master plans prepared in the Planning office there is a Campus Drive, and it goes all around.

The idea is that you come in to the campus from the outside--(you probably came in on Embarcadero here) or you come in Palm Drive or you come in from Hanover over here or Bowdoin Street--but you arrive at Campus Drive, then you head where you want to go, and as many as possible of the parking areas are on the periphery of Campus Drive, so that the heart of the campus become a walking campus. This used to be streets all the way around here. The first street to be closed was somewhere in the 1920s. This street was closed in the 1950s, this was closed in the 1960s, so that now it's a walking campus. And yet, I think it's been done so gradually that I feel (of course I'm prejudiced) that the character of the quadrangle has been enhanced and made more important. I give Church the credit for this. He kept the Oval, which was an Olmsted feature. It is just in grass or frankly weeds. We don't have the money to landscape this the way we'd really like to.

The most important thing he has recommended, which has not been put into effect, is for the inner-quad, which is quite a few acres in size. Originally it had eight round groves of trees. This surface now is kind of beat up asphalt and armorcoat. These walks are concrete. This is the church. Thomas Church wanted to enlarge the circles, make octagons out of them, edge them at seat height so people would have places to sit, put more planting in here, and frankly I don't believe he ever has got to a final recommendation of what sort of material he wanted to use. He would have liked to use brick. But because it's so costly we haven't been able to consider it.

Sanders: However, he brought this fountain and mall into here. He brought this--it's not a fountain, but it's a lawn area and it will be a sculpture area into here. He designed nooks and crannies all around here. He built a fountain behind the church. He created quite a handsome street out of this, which used to be an alley. Those are the types of things that he did.

#### 4) A Sense of Scale

Riess: When he was handed this task what were his instructions?

Sanders: We worked with him and told him the needs for buildings in the next two generations. For instance, the need for chemistry, the need for library expansion, an undergraduate library, the need for law.

Riess: So knowing what the program was, he placed approximately where these buildings might be?

Sanders: Yes, and then he would not only place the building but he would say, "These should be four story buildings or three story buildings with so much space in between" and then recommend how the courts could be used in between.

The most remarkable thing about Thomas Church to me, and I think he will go down in history for this, is his sense of scale. For a man who started out working on 25-foot lots in San Francisco and graduated into 40-foot lots or Hillsborough half-acres or acres or three acres, he could work all morning with a 25-foot lot in San Francisco and create a beautiful garden, and vistas and what not, and then come down here into a monumental arrangement of buildings, and his sense of scale is truly remarkable.

I'm hipped on scale myself. I don't have his feeling for it or his ability for it, but I think most of our cities, or many of our cities, are being ruined by buildings that are out of scale. I think each city has a scale. For instance, the Bank of America changed the scale of San Francisco and, in my opinion, slaughtered what it had been. The buildings that had been built in the twenties and thirties, the Russ Building and 450 Sutter, fitted into a San Francisco scale of buildings. You could still see the hills; you could enjoy the vistas. The buildings that are being built now are of a scale so that you don't see Russian Hill, Nob Hill, Telegraph Hill, Pacific Heights. You just see a mass of buildings.

Sanders: Church's feeling for scale is fantastic. He recognized this was a horizontal campus, as Paris is a horizontal city. But this doesn't mean you can't have five or six story buildings. The engineering building under construction right now is six stories. But it has a horizontal character to it or horizontal motif, if that's the word to use.

Riess: Were there "out of scale" things that had to be corrected?

Sanders: Yes, the Hoover Tower was totally out of scale with the original Stanford campus. It was finished in 1941. It was designed by Arthur Brown who did most of the buildings between World War I and World War II and a lot of them before World War I. Arthur Brown was a great architect who did the San Francisco City Hall, the Opera House, the War Memorial's building, the Coit Tower, a lot of beautiful buildings around.

I don't know how he was directed, or whether he felt that every campus needed a campanile (I think the Campanile in Berkeley is beautiful, a slender, graceful structure that comes right down to the earth), but in the Hoover Tower here they needed a lot of interior space at the bottom, so the Tower is too fat. It's a library, 16 floors of stacks, which is not practical. When they got to the bottom instead of bringing the exterior walls straight down, the building bulged out, but it didn't bulge out enough to become important. What I'm trying to say is that the Hoover Tower is out of scale with Stanford, but Church and others have done much to improve the situation.

When we went to build the Lou Henry Hoover Building [goes to map]--here's the Hoover Tower, that's the size of the base. The Lou Henry Hoover Building here I think was the hardest building any architect ever had to design. Charles Luckman designed it, and I think he did a noble job. It's a quiet building. He didn't try to make a sensational great piece of architecture that would go down in history. It's a series of two-story arches.

Then Church came along and carried the retaining wall across here and tied it into the base of the Hoover Tower so that it becomes a part of the base of the tower. He also on paper created this interesting plaza in front of the Hoover Tower so as to create interest at ground level. It's never been installed, but soon there will be a fountain out in the center--on axis with Hoover and Memorial Auditorium--and handsome paving which is about to begin construction. It's been financed and it's going to be called the Tanner Fountain. Obert Tanner is a wealthy man in Salt Lake City who has given water features to ten universities. This will be the tenth. He's also given libraries to ten universities. I asked him one day, "What do



Sanders: you start on now that you've finished water features?" He said, "I haven't decided yet." He gave us a philosophy library over here. Now he's giving us a water feature.

Riess: Then this plan will exist until completed more or less. This is really the long range.

Sanders: This plan is very flexible. You can see the law school is not as this plan at all, it's quite different.

Riess: It's quite a different shape, yes.

Sanders: This is the building I say is out of character with Stanford. It's not all the architect's fault because it would have been a very handsome building inside, but the building code changed during the design and construction so lots of the interior features that would have been very handsome had to be closed in. Outside the building was designed by the same people who designed the law school. S.O.M. designed the law school and everyone liked it. We think it's very handsome, fits into the Stanford scene; it's a quiet building with arcades. After it was designed, then we asked S.O.M. to design this one, the School of Education R & D building. This building was built first and it sat here all by itself. It looked totally out of character. It is better now that the law school has been built, and it's better now that the landscaping is in place and the surrounding area cleaned up. I object to the angles, there's no purpose to the angles, and I think they are out of character. But that's just my opinion. I know a lot of people agree. I'm not the only person saying that.

Riess: Looking at the plan, it suggests a change of terrain was the problem and that they did this offset thing to solve it.

Sanders: It wasn't. They had a street coming in here, a residential street, which they accentuated. The residential street has now been taken out--I don't know, it got out of hand.

Riess: This plan is prepared by the Planning Office based on what?

Sanders: Based completely on Church's long range master plan. This early one has Church's name on it. This we call the heart of the campus.

In addition to this, Church would sit here in this room and talk to us. This is all married student housing over here [Escondido Village]. This was all open fields until about 1962 or 1963. There're some great eucalyptus trees in here which you can see. Over in here there're very tall eucalyptus around the athletic area. Church is the type of person who would relate--actually Bob Royston was the

Sanders: landscape architect here. He and Church would sit here and talk about it. They got along beautifully. (Royston used to work for Church like nearly every other Bay Area landscape architect.)

Church would say things like, "Look, you've got high eucalyptus trees, two and three hundred feet here. Let's get some eucalyptus groves over in here to relate to them." Somebody else would have put 30 foot pines or 20 foot maples or something like that.

##### 5) Church on Campus: Wallace Sterling

Sanders: Also on many occasions we called Thomas Church in to consult on buildings in the Industrial Park. The Industrial Park starts over here, you know the Stanford Industrial Park. All the plans are routed through the planning office, and Church did the landscape on quite a few of them himself. He wanted the industrial park to have a character of its own, too.

Now, when we got out to SLAC, the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, that's the 2-mile-long building out here, Royston again was the landscape architect, Charles Luckman was the architect. Through this office the Stanford Trustees, particularly the chairman, Caroline (Mrs. Allan E.) Charles, were saying, "Harry, that's got to look like part of Stanford. It's got to be compatible to Woodside, Portola Valley, the beautiful land around it. It can't just be a lab with a bunch of concrete and trucks. It's got to be handsome."

At the same time the AEC was saying, "We've got a very tight budget. If it looks too nice, the people will think we're wasting the taxpayer's money." So it was really an amazing battle. It turned out quite well.

First of all, Luckman did a magnificent job in getting a lot of buildings on a minimum cost. They're quite handsome buildings. Secondly, Royston did just a yeoman's job on landscaping. Landscaping became very important. The scientists out there said, "Landscaping? We don't want trees. We're just going to do scientific experiments." At first, they didn't give a damn about how the thing looked, the scientists didn't or most of them didn't.

But the director and the staff out there are so proud of it now, it's marvelous to watch them. They take people around. I find them showing them the groves of eucalyptus, redwoods there. It's a beautiful campus within a campus really.

Sanders: Church was a consultant with Royston on that. So Church didn't do every job himself. He had a small office, he couldn't do all the jobs, he didn't want to do all the jobs. Some he was invited to take on and he'd say, "No, I'm busy enough. But I'll help you out consulting."

Riess: Where he would have drawn up the details of a plaza or something like that, then the working drawings all came out of his office.

Sanders: Absolutely, absolutely. The working drawings for this entire area, the working drawings for this entire area and all of this area between the Meyer library and the law school, it's all Church, every bit of it.

Riess: Who was in his office with him?

Sanders: Jack Stafford I would say was his right-hand man during all of this period. Jack, who is now in business for himself, is very capable. I think he understands Tommy perfectly and could execute the plan in a way that Tommy wanted it to be done. Others, too, like Walt Guthrie--Tommy always had a small but capable staff.

Tommy had a great love for Stanford. For one thing, Wallace Sterling, who was president of Stanford for 19 years, Wallace Sterling is a Canadian, a brilliant man, a powerful man, a brilliant mind, and also truly "an English gardener." He himself loves flowers. He loves trees. He and Tommy just got along like double twins.

Wallace Sterling is the type of person who, with all that he had on his mind and all of the things he had to do and raising money and taking care of the academic plant and everything else, he's the type person who would get back to his office--he'd meet in this room with us two or three times a month, with Tommy here one of those days at least--would get back to his office and say, "Harry, one of the new trees over by the library is leaning over. I think you better get somebody to tie it up." Or "Harry, why don't you plant some more petunias. You didn't plant enough." (We don't plant "the petunias" ourselves in this office, but Wally would say, "Harry, I know you can talk to the right person. Get them to put in some more trees.")

One day he phoned me and said, "Harry, the new roof is going in on the Faculty Club and they've got too much orange in the middle. I think you better get over there in a hurry and see that they mix the oranges and the purples and the browns and the reds and so on." Well, you can see why he and Church would get along.

Sanders: Church designed the President's Garden. The president of the University lives in the Lou Henry Hoover house, which was Herbert Hoover's house. When Mrs. Hoover died, Herbert Hoover gave it to the University for the president of the University to live in. Wally Sterling himself, with the aid of a gardener, took care of the garden. It was a really English garden, lots and lots of flowers. That was his avocation. He loved it. That was his recreation. And he has a beautiful garden now at his home in Atherton. Sterling is now the University's chancellor.

Church would tell him, "Well, put in new terraces" and tell him how to handle it. They loved each other. They just got along beautifully. That was fortunate. It was an era when the president was involved in the design of every building, it was one of his loves. As I say, he was really an English gentleman and an English gentleman gardener.

Another thing that Church did, I had a full time landscape architect on my staff who worked very closely with Tommy. His name is Dan Rolfs. He's now retired, living in San Francisco. I was going to tell you sometime today if you don't get enough information today from me--and later we're going to join Oscar Nelson, who is my master planner here, has been for years, a very competent person--if you don't get enough from Oscar and me, you can certainly call on Dan and he can give you lots of anecdotes about Church because he actually went out in the field with him on an almost weekly basis or maybe more.

Riess: That's how often Church was down here?

Sanders: Oh, absolutely, for a long time. And what we always teased him about, he always came in his old tan corduroy jacket and his old pants and shears falling out of every pocket. He would come down here on Saturdays and Sundays when there weren't people around, there weren't students wandering around and there weren't faculty, and he knew he had the place to himself. He'd go around and actually trim the bushes and prune lots of things the way he wanted them. When the White Plaza was first installed, Church was in there--oh, he must have come down six or seven weekends and gone around and pruned. I think that's the way he did a lot of his thinking.

Riess: I've heard of him doing that in the 25 foot lot gardens, but I've never--

Sanders: He did it on a 9,000 acre campus. That's why I say he has a great feel for scale. And if he found the trees had been put in that weren't the right kind, that weren't the right size, he'd say so. "Well, let's change them."



## 6) The Model, by Virginia Green

Riess: He did give you a planting plan for all of this?

Sanders: Oh, yes.

Riess: You were saying, "That's how he did a lot of his thinking" and I was going to ask you how much he did his planning in here with aerial maps and how much just walking around the campus? How do you get a sense of the scale and what the campus calls for?

Sanders: The combination. First of all, we have this model out here, in the lobby. Virginia Green built it. It's a funny scale, one inch equal 25 feet and I never heard of another model of that scale in my life. It was started before I came to Stanford. However, it's a good scale because it's large enough so that you can see the areas between buildings. You can see enough detail on buildings. And it's small enough so you don't have to get too much detail. It's a very good scale for the model.

I would say Church did, let's say, a fourth of his thinking over that model, a fourth on drawings from architects, and when he did the landscape master plan, he had all kinds of drawings showing, you know, "if a building was four stories high, what would happen to the sun and how much of the courtyard would be in sun and what time of the year it would be and so on." This model has been used as a work model, and actually an architect designing a new building, we'll let him pull that apart and try different shapes and different heights and different sizes on it. So it is kept up to date.

I noticed today that a new person built the model of the new Engineering Building, and he did a lousy job. The windows are too dark, the paving is the wrong color and the building is the wrong color, so it's got to go back.

Virginia Green--you may have never heard of her, but I think she's a part of the Tommy Church story because Virginia Green was a draftsman in William Wilson Wurster's office way back when, probably in the 1930s or early forties. One day, as I understand it, Bill Wurster asked her to do a model of a house that was being designed, just as an extra-curricular activity over the weekend. He knew she could "do" models, but I think this was her first job as a model maker. She did it so well that I understand the firm put her to making models.

Then she went into business for herself in a little 20 foot store on Clement Street, way out in the avenues. Then she expanded into two stores. Then she hired more and more people and a woman named

Sanders: Lyla-somebody helped her. Then she had a staff of young architectural draftsmen and people making models. And then she went from Clement Street down to Clementina Street down in the Mission district part of San Francisco where she had really a huge business.

She became known as the best model maker in the United States. She made models for people all over the country. She made the model of the Mall in Washington, for instance. She made most of the models for the Golden Gateway competition. She would have rooms locked and people sworn to secrecy. So if this room is working for Architect A, when the people left that room the door was locked and Architect B's people couldn't find out what Architect A was doing. She did that kind of work.

Riess: You mean she was dealing maybe with both Wurster and somebody else?

Sanders: She was dealing with three and four and maybe eight people all working in the same competition.

She did beautiful, beautiful work. She did all of our original model work. She's now retired and lives in a beautiful home in Marin County. I think it's one of the greatest stories of rags-to-riches I've ever heard. She's been written up, but nobody ever has really done a complete job on what she accomplished. She's remarkable. She trained a lot of people, and a lot of people are trying to emulate her work, but no one has taken her place.

But Church naturally was in and out of her office all the time. And models have become much more important.

Riess: We were getting at how it was that he got a sense of the scale. So you were saying that almost a quarter of his time he would spend with the model.

Sanders: Oh, yes, a quarter of his time with this model out here, a quarter of his time perhaps on studying drawings, new drawings and old drawings and then this map, and then probably the other half of his time on walking around and taking photographs and measuring and just looking.

In addition to the Planning Office here, we had a committee of the Board of Trustees on Buildings and Grounds, or Land and Building Development as it is now called, and it was headed from 1958 until three or four years ago by Mrs. Allan Charles, Caroline Charles, a great admirer of Tommy Church who also is a personal friend, the couples are friends.

Sanders: Mrs. Charles, although she's now had two strokes and is not in good health at all, she was an absolute dynamo who ran all sorts of activities in San Francisco and was just a great asset to an office such as this and to the University, one of the greatest of the Stanford greats. She would meet in this office whenever we asked her to, at least twice a month, review plans before we took them to the Board of Trustees, meet with Dr. Sterling, the president, meet with Tommy Church if we needed him to be present. And then I would present the plans to the Board of Trustees. She was the chairman of the committee. She has often said, flatteringly I guess, I never let her get caught. She knew what was coming and she could always support me and always did.

We had a remarkable administration here and a remarkable relationship with the Trustees. I think Church had a lot to do with their respecting what came out of this office because they knew Church had reviewed it with us. Occasionally I'd be presenting plans for a new building and one of the Trustees would say, "Has Tommy seen it?" I'd say, "Yes." "What did he say?" I'd say the good points, and the bad points, if it had both. "Well, if Tommy approves it, that's fine." You know, it was that kind of a relationship.

#### 7) Attention to Details

Sanders: There is one other very important thing he did. I want to say it before I forget it. It may be out of context. In fact, I ramble so that I'm often out of context.

When Tommy Church came to Stanford, the buildings that had been built since the original quad was virtually completed in the 1890s, the buildings that had been completed since then, most of them had been designed by Arthur Brown during one period, Eldridge Spencer during another period, with other architects involved occasionally. Most of them had different exterior lighting fixtures, different signs; the campus was a mish-mash of signs, signs tied with string around the stone columns in the arcade, signs stuck all over the place, signs stuck in the ground--"Alumni House This Way," you know, printed in somebody's handwriting, maybe blue, maybe red, maybe orange. The names on buildings were all different. Some were on the buildings engraved and etched in stone, some were just wood signs sticking out in front of buildings.

And I give Oscar Nelson in this office with whom we'll met later most of the credit here for organizing a continuity in what we call "street furniture"--I'm sure you know the term. We had all different

Sanders: kinds of benches. Each building looked like it had been built by a different group. It could have been on a different lot in San Francisco or Sacramento or New York.

Oscar found that the residential communities around here were taking out the light standards put in from 1900 on, which are, we think, of human scale, 10 and 12 feet high, some of them very good looking. The first ones came from Alviso or some little town such as that. Oscar found we could buy 50 of them at surplus for very little money. Well, we started replacing all of these other mish-mash or light fixtures. Some would be 30 feet high modern standards, and some would be just a lightbulb hanging on a chain. We started replacing the light fixtures around. Church worked with Oscar. But I'll give Oscar the credit on this.

Then we found that we could get a lighting manufacturer to make what are called Stanford S-1's, the original lighting fixtures. We found a manufacturer who would make these today at a nominal price. We still have bought old fixtures from people. I think it was Burlingame that heard that we were doing this and sent us down a truck load of fixtures not too many years ago, saying, "Here, we don't want these any more." They were putting in big 40-foot standards with much more light, totally out of scale in a residential community.

Tommy Church designed, at our request, a kiosk which has been copied campus after campus after campus.

Riess: It's been copied at Berkeley, hasn't it?

Sanders: Yes. We get requests in this office probably once a month from all over the world really, "Will you please send us the working drawings for the kiosk?"

Our answer is, "We can't. It's the property of Stanford University. It was designed by Thomas Church. You can call him or get your own landscape architect. We will send you a photograph of it." So we send a photograph and they copy it. The kiosk has gotten all the signs off of trees and off of stone columns and given the student billboards, and at the moment I'm guessing there must be 12 or 15 or more in the heart of the campus. You can't believe how things like that begin to clean up an area.

At the same time we got standardization of road signs with the Stanford brown and cream color, the standardization of names for buildings, so that there wouldn't be three buildings in a row with three different kinds of signs--a Stanford logo, if you will. I think Church has been just wonderful in this.



Sanders: He has found some light fixtures for buildings. Several came out of Australia. He's found benches that he's used in parks and areas around here, wooden benches, but they're compatible with Stanford. This again has unified the campus so you feel like you're on one campus and not just going from one building to another.

#### 8) Outside Architects Working at Stanford

Sanders: There's no question the man is a real genius in design. As I said in the beginning, and I think most architects who know him would agree, I'm sure they would, he's a great architectural critic. He does not try to dictate to the architects. He sticks to landscape architecture. But he won't hesitate to say to an architect that he thinks that if the building were recessed back 20 feet or had a shadow line or something like that, it would be more compatible in a certain area.

Riess: In general, you've always had the same roofing material and certain kinds of continuity of materials and color?

Sanders: Glad you brought up that question, because a lot of people think that when an architect is hired to do a building at Stanford-- and incidentally in the last 20 years we brought in many, many architects, some nationally known, many locally known, but instead of just dealing with one or two, we've been dealing with 20 to 30 different architects. We have a committee on campus to select architects from which this office puts together a panel, puts together material from them, arranges interviews if necessary-- there's an interview this afternoon for the remodeling of an old building.

Instead of trying just to deal with one architect, we really had, you might say, "spheres of influence." One for a while we called Dailey's sphere of influence, one the Pflueger sphere, one the Warnecke sphere, one the Hervey Clarke sphere, and so on. But we've brought in architects Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum from St. Louis. We brought in Caudill, Rowlett, and Scott from Houston and Los Angeles, working on the Medical Center. We brought in Harry Weese from Chicago on the Engineering Building, which is nearing completion now.

Riess: What was the intention in bringing all of these in?

Sanders: Simply that in review we felt at the time that these were the best people for a particular job. Obata has done a great many libraries. And we were influenced by the fact that he's a library expert.

Sanders: Caudill, Rowlett, and Scott has done many medical centers. We were influenced there. We're not totally happy with the result, but that's neither here nor there. At the same time, we've had a lot more local architects doing work. Smaller jobs, smaller remodeling, we try to find the best firm; we usually start with a panel of five or six and try to find the best firm for the job.

Riess: That's what you mean by spheres of influence, the panels?

Sanders: No, we had spheres of influence physically. I mean so that Dailey did three buildings in one area, Warnecke did three buildings in another area and so on. That isn't as true today as it was. Ernest Kump has done the two Hoover additions and the Health Center and some dormitories. But I think the University has a much broader outlook in going out and not just trying to limit itself. We don't want the buildings to look alike.

#### 9) Campus Compatibility

Sanders: Now what I started to say is that a lot of people think that when an architect is hired for a building at Stanford, the architect is told, "It must have a tile roof." This is not true. The architect is given a program, which is written in this office, a very detailed program which may be as much as 75 pages of single-page typing saying, 'Here's the site. This is what we need, so many auditoriums, so many classrooms, so many laboratories, so many student rooms, so many square feet--here's the budget. Now you're on your own.'

In the beginning, a number of the architects we worked with felt that Stanford was old-fashioned. Particularly in the early sixties people were trying to get away and saying, 'Let's do a glass box. Let's do something modern.' We didn't discourage them. We let them try. It was interesting to watch. One after another would come back and say, 'The statement'--it's a trite word, but I use it--'The architectural statement of the quadrangle is so strong that in the first line of defense, the buildings immediately adjacent to the quad, you cannot fight it. You have to be compatible.'

I give Warnecke credit for designing the first buildings on the campus in the late fifties which have a contemporary feeling and yet are, in my opinion, totally at home at Stanford, the bookstore and the post office. They have tile roofs. They have an arcade. And yet they have a modern feeling. Since then a lot of buildings have been built that are their own buildings. There is a contemporary flair or feeling to them, and yet I think through the use of scale,

Sanders: the use of colors, the tile roof really is the only single thing that ties the campus together. When you go up on the Behavioral Sciences hill, look down on the total campus, you find buildings are very, very different. The tile roof is the blending influence-- what's the word?--

Riess: "unifying"

Sanders: Unifying influence. Not every building has a tile roof. The hospital doesn't have a tile roof. Ed Stone was selected to design the original hospital-medical center, which is I guess as big as the quadrangle, the original quadrangle. It's an enormous series of building around courts, very much like the plan of the original quad. Ed Stone went to the same part of the world that Olmsted did. He went to southern Spain, or Moorish Spain, if you will, and designed buildings with Ed Stone's pierced grilles which have that Moorish character. I don't mean it's over-Moorish, but it's a modified Moorish. It doesn't have a red tile roof. There are a lot of buildings on campus that don't have red tile roofs, but not many people realize it.

But no one is told that he has to design a building to a certain design standard. He is asked to design a building that will be compatible with its neighbors. We give him as many drawings and photographs and plans as they want of the neighboring buildings. We give him as much of Church's thinking and have Church meet with him, had Church meet with him, at the very beginning so that he could point out details of the siting.

Riess: Automatically they would have an early encounter with Church?

Sanders: Yes, it didn't occur on every occasion, but usually it did, yes.

#### 10) The Landscape Architects

Sanders: We also try to bring the landscape architect in with the architect to help site the building and to get started right away--

Riess: This is the other landscape architect?

Sanders: Yes, whether it was Church himself or somebody else.

Riess: Now how did you select your other landscape architects? Church must have had a lot of input.

Sanders: He did. Usually the architect selected for a building would have the greatest input. We would not accept the name of somebody we didn't know and like. Or if we didn't know him, we'd look into it and then accept him only if we liked him.

Riess: Was it usually local? Did the people from other parts of the United States get a local landscape architect?

Sanders: I think in every case, yes. No, Harry Weese brought his own landscape architect from Chicago. And then Church looked over his shoulder and they became very close. (This is before Tommy got so sick.)

Gerry (Geraldine Knight) Scott designed the landscaping for one of our biggest faculty residential areas, Pine Hill. I've heard Tommy Church say many times that Gerry Scott knows more about plant material in California than any other landscape architect. Of course I think she's also a great human being and a tremendous person. Obata hired Gerry Scott when he designed a library at Stanford that was not built--this was the one that became too expensive. It was going to be a series of terraces very similar to the Oakland Museum, and I think Gerry Scott was hired by the architects for the Oakland Museum as consultant on plant material.

Riess: How about other than Royston?

Sanders: Jack Stafford has done work on his own, now. We've had a lot of other landscape architects. Let me try to think. There's one Ken Arutunian, who used to work in this office, who has done quite a few buildings now. He worked with Birge Clark on the recent chemistry building. Larry Halprin has done considerable work. I'm not as good remembering the landscape architects. I've been out of touch with some of them. We've had a number of them.

Riess: I have a list here of Thomas Church's landscape designs on the Stanford campus starting in 1959. The first one they mention is the Medical Center, 1959. He wouldn't have done anything here before then?

Sanders: He wasn't the consultant to the University before 1959, but Thomas Church had done work on the campus before 1959, mainly, I believe, in dormitories. I'm pretty sure he did the work in Moore Hall. That was built before '59. I think he did the work in Stern Hall, Wilbur Hall, in some of the science labs. I'm sure he did work before 1959. That was a huge job, the Medical School and Medical Center.



## 11) Present and Future Campus Development

Riess: It does sound in a way, though, like most history began pretty much around 1959.

Sanders: Yes, because for one thing I was the first full-time employee in this office, and the big building period was beginning.

Riess: Were you brought in from the east coast?

Sanders: No, I was brought in from San Francisco. I'd been with the Redevelopment Agency in the City Planning Office.

Eldridge Spencer, a very capable architect who is still living, had been a part-time planning director down here. He was here two afternoons a week and on call at other times.

One committee I failed to mention to you--there're so many around here--used to be called the Faculty Committee, a committee now formed of faculty, students, and staff, an advisory committee on land and building development. This is not a Trustee group. This is staff and faculty and students. It reviews every plan in this office also. It meets at least once a month and more then that on call. It has about fifteen members. Meets in this room. So every plan is presented to that committee before it's presented to the Board of Trustees. If the committee wants the architect to try other things, and we think this is legitimate, he does.

The committee has been very helpful through the years. There have been some times when it's been a nuisance, but for the most part it's been extremely helpful. It's caught things that no one else has caught. It has made excellent suggestions. It reviews the buildings for the industrial park, shopping center, SLAC, the residential--not all the plans for the residential area, but the students residential area, yes. (This office reviews plans for the faculty residential area, both architectural and landscape.) But this committee has played an important role.

Anyway, Eldridge Spencer had been here. He was appointed by Stanford's then President Tresidder, who had come here from being director of Yosemite Valley--and Spencer had been the master planner for the Yosemite Valley. Spencer came in and started this office about 1946, right after World War II. I think it was a very far-sighted point of view of Tresidder to start an office such as this. He recognized Stanford had all these acres--hundreds and thousands of acres of vacant land.

Sanders: All of the communities around were beginning to expand, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Portola Valley, Los Altos, and so on. Stanford was no longer "the farm." It was going to be taxed out of existence if something didn't happen and some of the land wasn't put to use.

The original master plan--one of these drawings up around the wall here--had as little as 1,500 acres reserved for academic use, and all the rest would have been developed for residential or commercial or industrial. Then actually through reviews with various and sundry people including this faculty committee, the academic area has expanded and expanded, until now it has probably around 6,000 acres of the land reserved for academic use, with about 2,500 acres used for industrial park and shopping center and private uses, private leased-out land, which we don't sell, we lease.

Riess: What is the student population?

Sanders: Student population last time I checked was 11,600.

Riess: Is that the fixed number when planning is done?

Sanders: It seems to grow a couple of hundred per year. At one time we prepared master plans on a basis of the ultimate goal of 14,000 students. That has been cut down. I don't think there's an official figure. I'm not sure. We can ask Oscar Nelson. He'll know. I don't think the student body will get beyond 12,500 in our lifetime. I hope it doesn't. I personally wish it had stopped at around 10,000 which to me was the perfect size for a university of this type. But being the great private university in the west with all sorts of activities, all sorts of facilities and advantages, it's hard to keep it down. And yet I think it's been kept down remarkably well.

It's been a big job, I'll put it this way, to maintain the open space. Because everybody in the country who wants to start a laboratory or a scientific development or a private-quasi public development such as behavioral sciences--the Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences leases 11 acres from Stanford, at \$1 a year, and it's been a great god-send to us, it's wonderful--but we have people who want 2,000 acres for a monkey colony or a 100 acres for this development or that and it's awfully hard to maintain the open spaces that I think the University has to maintain in order to continue to be a great university and a great influence in this area. We can't just develop every inch.

Parking is an enormous problem where faculty and staff members all want to park right under their own windows. And it's awfully hard to keep people from saying, "Why can't I build way out in the

Sanders: field?" Well, that field we respect as open space. We don't want the campus to continue to get bigger and bigger. We're trying to contain it to within a walking possibility.

Riess: Yes, good luck. They're just about to revise all the parking arrangements on the Berkeley campus next year.

Sanders: Oscar Nelson told me this morning he's going to a parking meeting. The union, the USE, the union that is organized at Stanford now, is fighting the parking regulation. Stanford two years ago put in pay parking, but there are still free places to park. Where did you park by the way? Did you get in one of these places on the lot?

Riess: The first place, on Memorial Drive. Yes, there was lots of room there.

## 12) The Stanfords, and Olmsted's Intention

Riess: In plan the spaces here are really so much more formal it seems to me than on the Berkeley campus. Did Tommy talk much about what his feeling was for this campus?

Sanders: This goes back a lot to Frederick Law Olmsted. Senator and Mrs. Stanford when they decided originally to build the University went to Boston to the then President of M.I.T., whose name was Walker. He became their consultant in what to do, how to go about establishing a university, what to do academically, what to do physically and every other way.

I think Mrs. Stanford would have liked the Stanford campus to have looked more like Yale or Harvard or Brown or Princeton, individual buildings with great expanses of lawn in between. Because when Senator Stanford died, and it became her responsibility, she started building individual buildings, several of which collapsed in the earthquake so they no longer exist.

There was a running feud between Mrs. Stanford and Olmsted and the original architect. The Olmsted people obviously had much more to do with the original design of Stanford than did the architects. The architects were a Boston firm; it was then called Shepley, Ruten, and Coolidge, the successors to H.H. Richardson. Richardson, the great architect, had started a firm and he was Shepley's uncle, I guess it was, or Coolidge's uncle or related to both. But Richardson had died before the Stanfords contacted the firm. Lots of people

Sanders: will tell you Richardson designed Stanford. He didn't. He was dead. But his firm did. And his Richardsonian influence is everywhere.

Olmsted really prepared the master plan and then went to the architects in Boston and said, "Now design the buildings." Olmsted traveled abroad. Most campuses start with a little college; somebody gives them the money for a building and they build the building. Then somebody else gives them the money for a dormitory and they build that. They want this red-brick Georgian. Then they want this grey stone. Somebody else wants a concrete building over there.

But the Stanfords gave such an amount of money and therefore much of the original building was done at one time and Olmsted recognized that this was a semi-arid climate, I'm quoting him, and you could not have great expanses of lawns because you don't have the water to water them (this is a good year to say that), so he went to the semi-arid climates of Moorish Spain, southern Spain, parts of Italy, parts of southern France, which are very much the same climate as Palo Alto, and developed the Stanford campus on that theory, which was totally different from the eastern seaboard campus where it rains off and on all year and you can have green lawns.

I said that after Senator Stanford died Mrs. Stanford began building individual buildings. She built the Museum and a gymnasium and library, and the library and the gym both collapsed in the earthquake. But she wanted separate buildings. She didn't like this feeling of the one great arcade, which has been a godsend because the one-story buildings in the inner quad, as we call it, these (points out on map) were all originally one-story buildings here, with 19-foot ceilings and we found in the 1950s they could be double-decked, without any change in the fenestration or the exteriors. And we get double the floor space in these buildings.

These outer quad buildings are not as pure as the inner quad ones architecturally, they're really kind of Victorian Romanesque. We have gutted some of them now and gotten--for instance this building (pointing to map) used to be the Physics Building, we gutted it and it's a five-story building now in what used to be a three-story building with no change to the exterior. Same thing was done to this building, Jordan Hall, and the same thing is being done to this building (History Corner) now and to this building (Physiology) now so as to get more floor space and try to maintain the character at the same time.

But how did I get off on that subject? You were asking a question.



Riess: I was interested in Thomas Church's recognition of Olmsted's intention.

Sanders: Oh, Thomas Church, who has traveled extensively, of course, recognized what Olmsted was doing here. I don't think Tommy Church would ever want to put grass in the inner quad because you couldn't keep it going, you couldn't keep it alive. Church did, however, feel that we needed some green, more green than just trees. Church has put in a lot of lawn, but in limited areas. Now I think he really felt that this was what Olmsted wanted. I think he undoubtedly has great admiration for Olmsted.

Church is an historian. I think he felt the responsibility of carrying out a plan that was developed by a great landscape architect planner in the 1880s. Church feels a sense of history. I think Church's design for the campus itself in both paving, water features, benches, walls--I'll show you some of them today--I think he feels this is thoroughly in keeping with what would have been done in Moorish Spain. He has large expanses of paving, but he's broken it, softened it with enough greenery. And where there have been abrupt walls and harshness, Church has modified them and softened them.

Riess: Did Olmsted leave detailed landscaping drawings that could have been consulted? Or not even detailed, a sense of paths and movement through spaces.

Sanders: There are many designs which now belong to the Stanford Art Museum and have been exhibited in recent years. Some have been in traveling exhibits. I'm vague on saying how detailed the landscape plans are because I don't remember. Far more detailed than that, yes.

But a lot of other people have had influence in much of the planting around here. Gardner Dailey, when he was a student at Stanford in the early part of the century, for instance, designed and planted most of the trees in these two areas on either side of the Oval.

### 13) About Tommy

Sanders: Frankly, I just love Tommy. Everybody in this office loves Tommy. There never was a more real person to work with. He never flaunted his--you know, as busy as he was, he'd always give us time. He never failed us. He knew everybody in the office by name. He'd come down here and sit and drink coffee with us. The informality of our relationship with him is a rare thing to have with anybody.

Sanders: The world is so full of people rushing from one meeting to another, not having time to even say "Hello." But not Tommy Church. He maintained a human side that was one of his really great, great features. There's no question, I say it again, he was a genius in design. But he's also the most human person alive. I can't say enough in his favor. I think you'll find this uniformly wherever you go and with everyone who knew him.

Other people may be given credit for bringing the landscape gardener out of the term landscape gardening to landscape architecture-- I'm sure there are other people who have worked hard at it--but Tommy really, and I think you'll find this pretty true nationally, I know lots of architects in all parts of the country and they all have tried at one time to get Tommy to do a job for them.

They all recognize that Tommy really is the person who not only made landscape architecture a profession, but I think much more than that, I give him credit for being certainly one of the instigators of a new profession of urban design, which is more of a combination of city planning, landscape architecture, architecture, what have you. Tommy thinks in terms of large scale design, urban design if you will. I'm sure he could do just as capable a job in going into a city and relating a civic center to a central business district as he could on campus.

Riess: The kind of thing that Halprin went from his office and did.

Sanders: Yes.

Riess: That's very interesting that you say that.

Sanders: I credit it all to his feeling for scale. Now I was on an advisory committee I guess you'd call it when John Carl Warnecke was doing a master plan for Santa Cruz. There were others involved, as you know, quite a few became involved. I guess Tommy was the landscape consultant or the main landscape consultant on that. I was fortunate enough to hear a lot of his thinking at that time.

The campus originally was designed for 27,500 which now I don't think it ever will achieve. I hope it doesn't. All the Cal campuses at that time were going to be 27,500. I don't know how successful they feel it is now. I think it's the most beautiful single piece of territory or ground I've ever seen in my life.

You were talking earlier about what Tommy did at Cal. I don't know Cal intimately now at all, and there are probably a half dozen buildings that have been built since I've even been on the campus, but I used to know it very well and this office and our counterparts

Sanders: in the A & E office in Berkeley have been very close, Louis DeMonte, Bob Evans, Al Wagner. Both the Berkeley campus and the statewide group we've known very well; Jack Wagstaff at Santa Cruz, we've always been friends and kept in touch.

But Tommy did remarkable things there for a while. I'm talking about when he was a consultant there probably in the early sixties. I think after that, I don't know whose fault it was, probably just the fault of necessity, many of the things that he had done, many of the glades he had created and vistas he had created, were built on. I think many of his features were destroyed. I don't know if Tommy would agree with that statement or not. I have no idea.

Riess: At Berkeley it seems like one achievement was repairing old vistas, cutting through the overgrowth and undergrowth, but that doesn't seem to have been the kind of task here.

Sanders: No, this was a different task. Although Tommy is very brave. Everyone loves a tree, but if Tommy doesn't like a tree where it is, he'll say, "Take it out." I'm kind of the type person any tree, "Oh, save it!" But Tommy if he thinks the tree is in the wrong place or the wrong type of tree or it's going to hurt, "Take it out." He's not a bit afraid to take trees out or move them. Also he doesn't depend on mature trees; he enjoys planting new ones.

But I think the Berkeley situation was a remodelling job, if you will, whereas here at Stanford he actually did an awful of creating of the campus beyond the confines of the quad.

[begin second tape]

[Oscar Nelson, Stanford Planning Office, present]

Riess: How did you work with Thomas Church?

Nelson: I'm also a landscape architect. I basically worked with him here on the campus as our representative, not in specific projects as much as Dan Rolfs did, but more in overall aspects of projects. In other words, helping to coordinate them so that we had no ragged edges between different jobs. There were a number of things which I was able to feed to Tommy along those lines which saved him time. We rarely had disagreements on that sort of thing. I thought it was a good working relationship.

Riess: When you talk about "ragged edges between jobs," that does conjure up a picture of one landscape plan ending with eucalyptus and the next one starting with live oak or something like that. Is that what you mean?

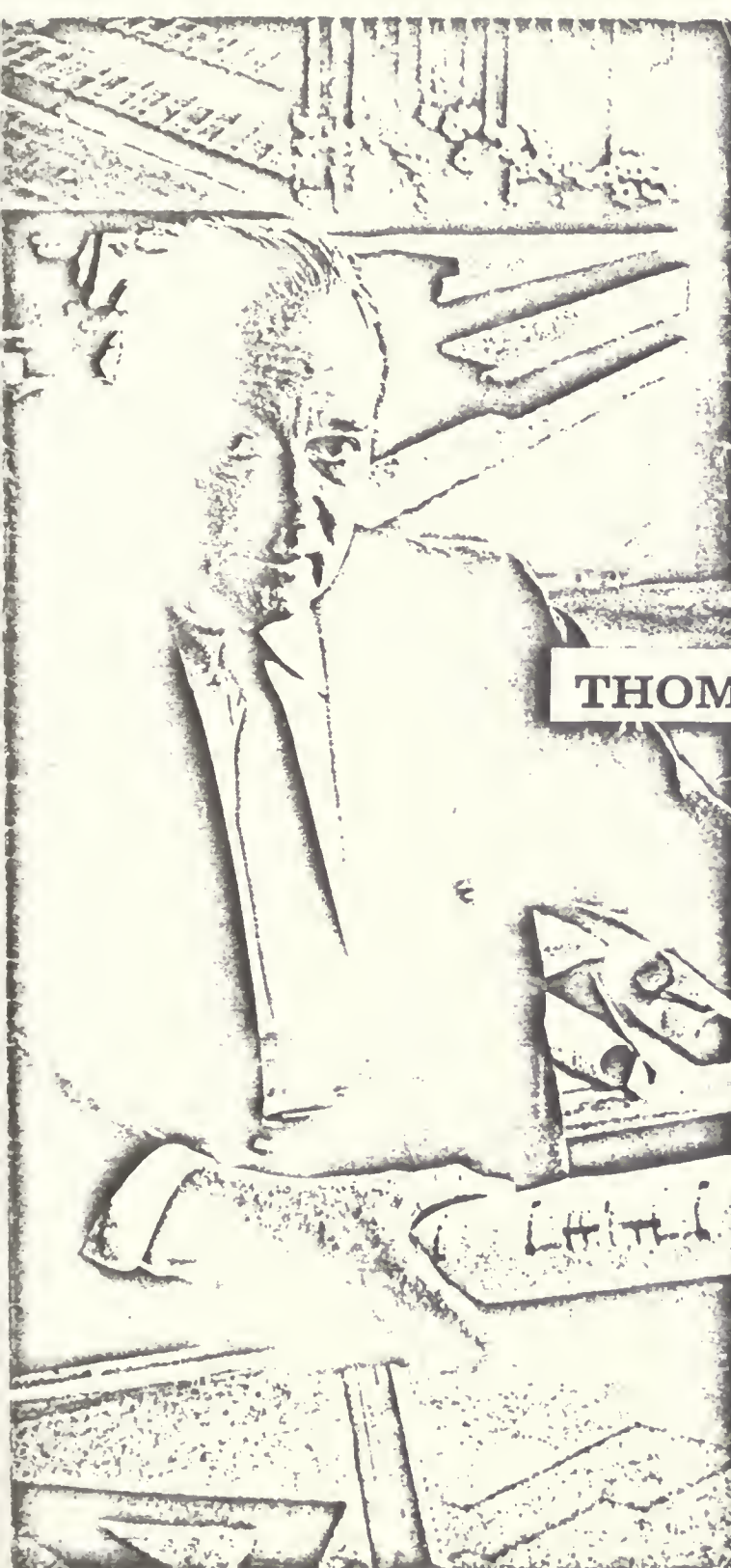
Nelson: Exactly. That's a problem we had here on the campus before we had Church come in and become executive landscape architect. Every job had a wall literally around it. You could almost recognize the different jobs by the different landscape architect; he would have his own peculiarities of design, his own peculiarities of favorites in plant material, and even get into lighting standards and pavement types and all this sort of thing. There was no unity, no unification, no carry-through on the campus.

Sanders: To use one example, one landscape architect would have a five-foot path and the next one would have a four-foot path and nobody would have caught it, in the past.

Oscar and I would sit in on every design conference, on building design, or landscape design. Oscar's job was working with Church and architects and other landscape architects telling them the facts of life including what went on underground, utilities. People would be building basements in areas where Oscar would say, "You can't do this. That's an underground steam tunnel," or whatever.

But on the carry-through, Church feels very strongly that this is an institutional problem, particularly here at Stanford, and that no one job, no one project, no one building should be any more important than the whole complex, visually and aesthetically and functionally. That, of course, has been my approach and this has been basically the approach of the Planning Office of which I am so proud.





from Landscape Design and Construction

## THOMAS DOLLIVER CHURCH

*The Man Who Put People  
Into The Landscape*

By  
DOUG STAPLETON

THOMAS DOLLIVER CHURCH has been called, with affection, the Grand Old Man of Landscape Architecture. Though meant as the highest praise, this is neither kind nor accurate, for it implies a man who has dreamed his dreams, completed his appointed tasks, and sits on the sidelines, warmed in the sun of memories. This is not Tommy Church at all. He is not old in any sense of the word, in years, in ideas, in creativity, in execution. He is a vigorous, dynamic man with a crisp vitality that sparks ideas, ideas that leap and tingle with creative freshness. As for being Grand, that is absurd. As a foreman on a project Tom Church had designed and was supervising said of him, "He's got no side. Why, on the job, you'd think he was one of the workmen, except he knows what he's doing." No. Thomas D. Church is NOT the Grand Old Man of Landscape Architecture. But he is, of course, a genius.



Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Everitt L. Miller

A HORTICULTURALIST INTERPRETS CHURCH'S WORK AT  
LONGWOOD GARDENS, 1971-1975

Interview Conducted by  
Suzanne B. Riess

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Everitt L. Miller

June 5, 1977

Interviewed at Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

# 1) Thomas Church's Work at Longwood Gardens

Miller: [Walking through Theater Gardens. See map.] Prior in this same location we had various levels or terraces going down, but we lacked the direction of circulation for the people to walk from this location of the theater garden around to the flower garden walk. Mr. Church has very nicely used old brick in the walkway, and a stone wall to enclose the garden. It is formal in design, and impressive in appearance.

This particular garden, the open-air theater garden, is an area where the people gather during intermission. They can relax and see horticultural beauty in a well designed garden. In the evening we also place torches around, which give a nice and soft lighting effect.

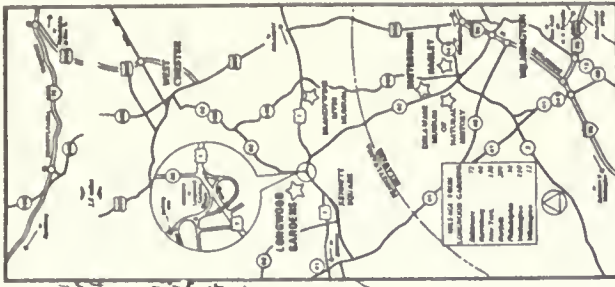
Riess: When you had Thomas Church come, did you have specific areas that were problems?

Miller: There were certain areas that Longwood wanted him to design. I recall our number one objective at his first visit was the planning and circulation throughout the center part of the garden. Longwood was attracting close to a million people a year in the late sixties and the gardens were not originally designed to have a large number of people.

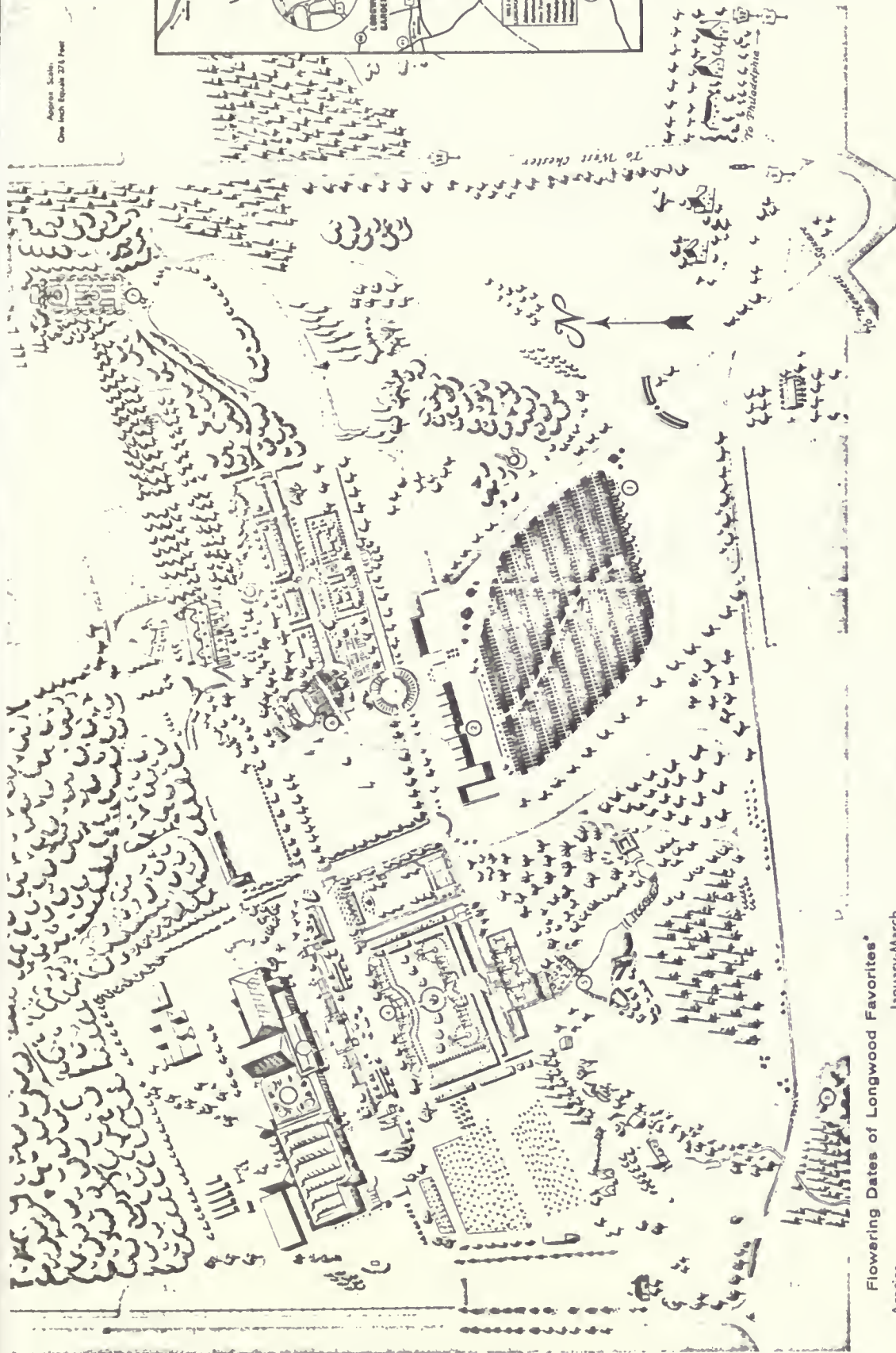
Riess: To sandwich in some of the factual things, when did you first contact Thomas Church? When was he first brought to work at Longwood?

Miller: Mr. Church started his consulting services with Longwood in 1971. At this time in the history of Longwood we had a change in the chairman of the board; Mr. Frederick became the new President of the Board of Trustees. Being a landscape designer, Mr. Frederick felt that Longwood should bring in an outstanding professional architect to work with us on certain design and circulation problems. Tommy Church, being the best in the country, was selected.





Approx. Scale  
One inch Equals 2 1/2 Feet



### Flowering Dates of Longwood Favorites\*

|                                   |                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Acacias                           | January-March      |
| Azaleas                           | February-May       |
| Camellias                         | January-April      |
| Chrysanthemums                    | September-December |
| Cymbidium Orchids                 | March-April        |
| Dogwood                           | Late April-May     |
| Lilacs                            | First week of May  |
| Rhododendrons                     | March-May          |
| Roses                             | All year           |
| Waterlilies                       | July-October       |
| Spring Conservatory Flowers       | January-April      |
| Spring Flowering Trees and Shrubs | April-May          |

\*Includes Conservatory and Outdoor displays.

1. PARKING AREA
2. RECEPTION CENTER
3. MAIN CONSERVATORY
4. MAIN FOUNTAIN GARDEN
5. ROCK GARDEN AND WATERFALL
6. OPEN AIR THEATRE
7. ITALIAN WATER GARDEN
8. PICNIC AREA

## LONGWOOD GARDENS

R. J. Salbert, Director  
E. L. Miller, Asst. Director (Horticulture)  
G. E. Thompson, Jr., Business Administrator A. L. Jarvela, Superintendent of Maintenance

Miller: And this is all part of Tommy's design--that little garden, this walkway, this overlook, and the little seating area.

[Standing at the west side of the Theater Graden.] As you can see, this is a long, brick flower-border walk. Tommy felt that a terminal feature was needed at the west end [of the flower garden walk], so he created this sitting terrace area for the theater guests.

You were asking about lights. Tommy did mention lighting and we do have a couple of lights hanging from the trees as he suggested.

Riess: Did he come for long stays to figure it all out?

Miller: He came for about two or three days on each trip.\* A few of us, the director, the chairman of the board, our maintenance superintendent and myself would spend these two or three days with Tommy, on each visit. We would take the design problems and try to condense them into just one area. So, every time he came we took a different garden area to discuss, and worked out new designs.

[Flower drive looking toward main house.] This was another area where he helped us. He felt that from this lower walk, there should be a view on axis to the main house. He suggested that we build the steps and the brick walkway from the flower garden walk to the lower roadway.

[Peony Garden] One thing about Tommy, he would give us the design, but with regards to plant material, he would leave it entirely up to Longwood. He would not recommend what trees or plants to place in any of his newly designed gardens. In this particular garden design, he was trying to accent these large cypress trees. The design, as you notice, has steps going down to the beautiful old cypress trees.

[Square Pool Garden] This particular square fountain garden was designed by Mr. duPont in 1908. The circular pool up above along the flower garden walk was his first garden feature and was built in 1907. Of course, being an engineer, duPont loved to work with drawings and enjoyed contriving surprises, like water pools and fountains.

[Wisteria Garden] This wisteria garden is another one of Tommy's designs. These are tree wisterias growing along the curved path. Note, we do have the raised beds, using granite stone.

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\*See schedule of visits attached.



- Miller: Here's a very interesting observation: We are attracting hundreds of thousands of people walking through this garden. Notice the sharp curve in the pathway. You see no one walking across the grass--everyone stays on the paths.
- Riess: I was just going to say that, yes. In fact, when I was walking back to meet you, I heard a family talking, saying, "Well, if a thousand people walked across it, what would it look like?" So you have inspired a conscience in people.
- Miller: You see no signs at Longwood saying, "Stay off the grass."
- This is going to be a wisteria arbor.
- Riess: Is this redwood by any chance?
- Miller: No. I understand it's treated pressed wood.
- Riess: If people don't get back into these corners, they're missing something.
- Miller: What we're trying to create at Longwood are quiet areas where people can come and read, relax and enjoy the beauty, and hear the sounds of birds and water.
- Riess: It doesn't have a particular style. What would you call a spot like this? It's almost California to me.
- Miller: Actually, you know a lot of Tommy's work is designed with a touch of California.
- We have considered having the arbor repeat itself on the far side of the garden. In one of Tommy's earlier drawings it did show a repeat of the arbor.
- Riess: It wouldn't seem necessary since it's not a symmetrical area anyway.
- Miller: That's right. What we are doing in this wisteria garden is accenting on these beautiful cypress trees. The grass, as you can see, is giving us a canvas to show off these beautiful trees.
- Riess: And that's what the original garden was, a garden of trees?
- Miller: No. Originally, 20 years ago, this garden was planted with old roses and had some peonies. The only plants that remained to work into Church's plan were the large arbor vitae that frame the garden. Of course, these old cypress trees were here.
- Riess: Do you remember when he was working here how he sketched this out?

Miller: He would make sketches here, and then from his studio in California he would forward on to us the design of the walkways and the arbor in a total garden design. What we do in planting inside is our own initiative.

You might be interested--we did ask Tommy, at least I did, a couple of times, if he'd give me a few suggestions and remarks about what we're doing in the main conservatory at Longwood. He said, "Everitt, that's not in my bailiwick. When I see beauty, I'm not going to interrupt it." He said, "It's fine. It's beautiful. Keep it up." But he did contribute a number of suggestions as I remember.

Church was such a quiet man. He'd come out to the gardens and we would explain and go over our problems with him. He would then go down to the area under discussion with us and we would talk about it. It was more or less a relationship where we all contributed to the final results. For instance, Mr. Frederick suggested the raised beds in the wisteria garden, Mr. Church suggested maybe a curve.

Tommy, in his old pair of khakis, very nonchalant, but alert, would walk around with us and make some comments, and say, "Well, what if we do this or change it this way? Would it work?" I think this was one of his most unique characteristics, his ability of trying to blend his thoughts with thoughts of others, never forcing anything.

Riess: Did he work at all with a model? Or did you have a scale model?

Miller: We had drawings of all our properties; we were able to give him the exact measurements of walkways or gardens so that he could take them back to California and spend time making sketches, and drawings.

Riess: By that time he was practically the only person in his office. Or was Walter Guthrie there?

Miller: I'm not sure, I think he was working by himself. I think Longwood was more or less a retirement project for him.

[Going north of flower garden walk to Peirce area.] This is another circulation suggestion that Tommy made. You notice that brick walk was going right towards the beech tree area? We had problems with people walking on the grass and around the tree. He suggested that we construct this macadam path and veer to the left of the hedge and tree and go around the beech area so the visitor could look into the area. He also suggested the trimming of this yew plant so people could see the characteristics of the bark and the main stems.

Riess: This is nice, how you come on to the level then at this point.

Miller: This is creating another room with the benches facing the beech tree. He carried this pathway up south of the house so that the public could look at the house from a distance instead of up close.

Another design that Tommy suggested was this little patio off the southeast corner of the house, a very private and practical type of patio where people can sit, and rest. It also captures this beautiful vista view looking east towards the old Peirce Arboretum.

Tommy also suggested the pruning of the lower limbs of those large trees, so that these vista views could be seen. You can see the countryside of Chester County through the trees to the north.

He suggested that we keep this large tree [Hemlock] because it gives depth to the view.

Riess: It must have been very exciting, to have him here.

Miller: I thought it was one of the most wonderful and profitable experiences, at least in my life, to have the opportunity not only to know Tommy, but to associate with him, to see how he operates in a nice quiet manner, no big ballet.

Riess: Yes, no entourage.

Miller: We'd start early in the morning, let's say at 8:30, and then we'd stop for lunch. We'd discuss whatever problem we were working on during the morning across the luncheon table, then after lunch we would revisit the area that we were looking at in the morning and he would make some additional sketches, or notes.

In the later afternoon, he would return to Mr. Frederick's home, where he was spending the night. I'm sure during the evening Mr. Church and Mr. Frederick would continue discussing Longwood's landscaping problems. He would spend a couple hours during the evening making additional sketches.

The following morning when we were all together, he would say, "Now this is some of the thinking I'm suggesting." We would discuss his sketches and suggest, "Maybe this should be changed slightly, because of this or that."

Then he would take his sketches and Longwood's maps back to his office in California and would later forward on to us the final sketch or drawings.

Miller: Our maintenance department, under Art Jarvela, would work out the working plans so that construction could go ahead with the landscape operation or project.

Riess: It worked very efficiently and speedily with that small an operation, just working directly with him.

Miller: Yes, as I said, he was so easy to work with.

Riess: Did he compare this with any other public gardens or spaces that he knew in Italy or other places? Do you remember him talking historically in that way?

Miller: He probably did, but I can't recall. He was a great admirer of gardens in Europe. Every once in a while he would say that he was going over to Paris for a long weekend.

[Walking toward conservatory.] Speaking of opening up areas, one of the suggestions that Tommy made, and I didn't mention earlier, was his idea of viewing the main conservatory from this path. The view had been screened off with a high lilac hedge, and the visitors weren't able to see the main conservatory. Tommy felt that from this vantage point along the path that one should be able to see the main greenhouse. He suggested that we remove the lilacs. Now one can capture the tremendous vista, looking through the trees with the greenhouse in the distance.

Riess: You said he would go home and work on sketches overnight at Mr. Frederick's house. Did any radically different things arise?

Miller: Oh, yes, the first open-air theater garden that I showed you, I think he submitted about five or six different renderings during a year or two before we finally agreed on the one we have today.

[Entering the azalea area] While he was consulting at Longwood, Longwood was building a new azalea house conservatory. Tommy drew up plans for the new entrance walkway and landscaping of the entrance. If you notice, this yew along the walkway, Tommy suggested that we prune it so the visitor could see the main stem of the tree. He designed this foyer path entrance and courtyard in front of this azalea house. Again, the same beautiful curve.

And here we have a grade difference and he suggested this retaining wall just blend into the edge, so it became a place where people can sit.

Riess: Who did the follow-through? Who supervised?



Miller: Well, our own staff did the follow-through, and Tommy on his next visit to the gardens. Longwood has a chairman of the board, Mr. Frederick, who, as I mentioned, is very much interested in all landscape projects. Also, our director, Dr. Seibert, is extremely interested in any new landscaping or projects going on.

Longwood has an advisory committee as well. The advisory committee is mostly members of the duPont family who know Longwood as a private garden. They are very much interested in seeing that any new changes made would be in keeping with the way Mr. duPont would have had them carried out.

Longwood also has a visiting committee. These are professional people that are either directors, or key personnel of institutions similar to Longwood throughout the country.

[Front of main conservatory] This esplanade in front of our main conservatory is another Tommy Church design. If you can visualize this area before the change, the macadam drive went across the front of the conservatory entrance. Tommy suggested this fishtail design pattern, which is beautiful. As he said, it's just like throwing down a large carpet.

Riess: What a nice concept.

Did Mr. duPont design the engineering of the large fountains?

Miller: Yes. Mr. duPont arrived back from touring Europe in 1925, and after visiting Versailles, France, he designed the fountain garden. In 1921, Mr. duPont had just completed building the greenhouse, and conservatories, and needed an attraction in front of the greenhouse.

Before Mr. duPont built the fountains in their present location I understand there were a row of boxwood plants planted in the same shape that the fountains now have. One of the suggestions of design that Tommy Church had, when he was sitting here on the terrace viewing the fountains, was that we remove the front row of boxwood and replant them in clumps, so that the visitor would be able to see the Italian artwork on the limestone.\*

Riess: Oh, yes, otherwise it would be masked completely from up here and even from the walkway.

Miller: That's right. Tommy created these groupings, or islands, of boxwoods in front of the fountain garden.

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\*Illustrated.

Riess: It must be hard to say, "Remove all those boxwood. Cut down that tree."

Miller: Mr. Church had such a keen eye and appreciation for detail, and a flair for bringing out the true beauty of plants in a garden.

## 2) The Future of Longwood Gardens

Riess: [In Mr. Miller's office] How was Tommy Church known to Mr. Frederick?

Miller: Tommy Church has been known to all of us in the landscape field as one of the leading landscape architects in this country. I understand Longwood was one of his last gardens that he was working on before becoming ill.

This drawing shows the varietal demonstration garden, a growing area for new plants, such as annuals, perennials, vines and turf. This educational display will represent to the visiting public a demonstration of new plants, and how well they do in this area.

Riess: Was this part of the thinking in 1970, to make it an educational demonstration program?

Miller: Actually we started educational programs back 20 years ago. Longwood started to label plants back 22 years ago. Education programs really evolved during the last 22 years at Longwood.

[Looking at Varietal Demonstration Garden plants] Tommy suggested we have a walkway coming up from the lower greenhouse parking lot, and then have a walkway right into the gardens without walking through the upper parking lot. Here on the drawing he suggests a walkway for our students from the classroom to the garden without walking through the parking lot. He also suggested an overlook of the varietal garden. This is to be an arbor for vines and shade loving plants growing under the arbor.

Riess: What would you say is the chief difference between what he is doing with these areas and what you were doing?

Miller: I would say the overlook, arbor, and the shapes of the garden plots are the main differences.

Riess: He's revised the arrangement of the small spaces.





TERRACE VIEW of famed fountain-gardens looks across acres of landscape. "Cubed" maples line path behind fountain basins made of stone brought from Italy for the purpose. Thomas Church design, above.

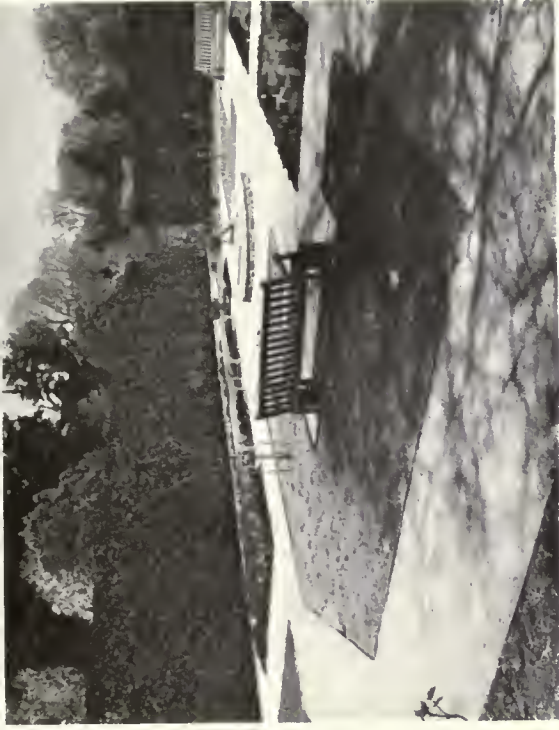








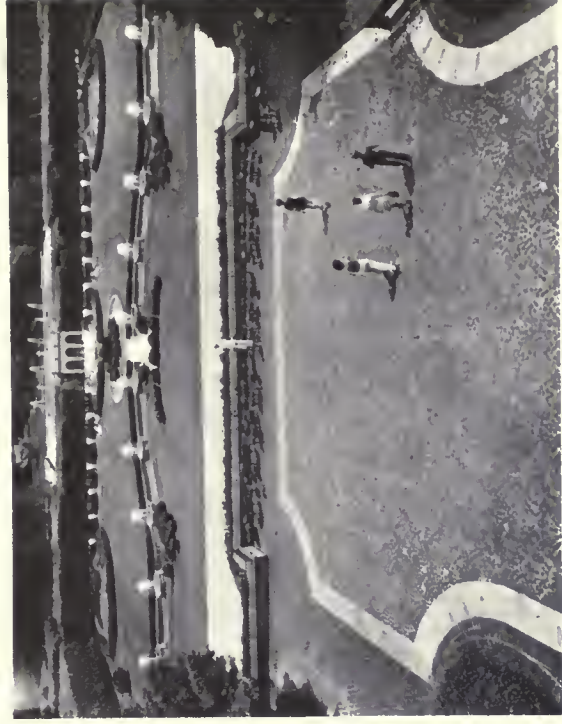
Theatre Garden



Peony Garden



Wisteria Garden



Fountain Garden from Esplanade

Garden designs by Thomas D. Church at Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. Photos courtesy Longwood Gardens.



Miller: Slightly, yes. Instead of planting plants in straight rows, we will plant in groups, giving a number of marginal shapes.

Riess: It's interesting, the shapes have gotten much softer.

Miller: Oh, yes.

This is his sketch, whereas these other plans were done by students.

Riess: Pursuing this a bit further, when you say that you knew Thomas Church as "the greatest," did you associate him mostly with residential gardens, or what kind of areas?

Miller: I would say residential gardens. Ten years ago I visited California and had the opportunity of having Tommy take me around to see some of the gardens that he designed. Everyone in horticulture that had anything to do with horticultural design knows of Tommy Church and his great ability.

[Looking over Thomas Church's drawings]

- 1) Preliminary Master Plan Control Area of Longwood Gardens, dated November, 1971.
- 2) South Terrace of Fountain Garden, dated November, 1971.
- 3) Conservatory and Esplanade, dated November, 1971 (Note Fishtail Pattern).
- 4) Azalea House Entrance Development, dated October, 1971.
- 5) Preliminary Study of the Flower Garden area, April, 1972.
- 6) Peony and Wisteria Garden, dated June, 1973.
- 7) Revised Flower Garden, dated August, 1973.
- 8) Preliminary Plans and sketches - Varietal Demonstration Garden, dated August, 1973, November, 1973, January, 1974.

This preliminary drawing on November 15, 1973, of the varietal demonstration garden, was one of his early drawings. You can see by his drawings how he tried to get deeply involved. Now this is the drawing that he finally recommended to us at Longwood, a year later.

His first sketch showed a tremendous amount of detail, formal rose garden, overlook, arbors, stone retaining walls, walkways, flower and vegetable beds, etc. Longwood felt that this first concept was just too busy, too formal, for the area. It was felt that a more educational feeling and arrangement or concept was required. We did not want this area to compete in design with our main gardens at Longwood.

Riess: And so after he had gone to all that trouble, Longwood would tell him, "No, I don't like that."

Miller: Oh, yes, and he would smile and say, "Well, let's get back to work."

Riess: How many students do you have working at Longwood?

Miller: We have 40 horticultural students during the summer time.

Riess: Do you offer a degree?

Miller: Yes! We have a two-year course of graduate study in ornamental horticulture, leading to the degree of Master of Sciences in Ornamental Horticulture. This program is sponsored by the University of Delaware and Longwood Gardens.

Longwood, through the education department, selects twelve undergraduate students to work and obtain practical experience in horticulture for ten weeks during the summer. Longwood also conducts a two-year professional gardener training program, selecting 7 students each year. And we also have a one year international student program.

Riess: On scholarships?

Miller: Yes, we pay a stipend in each of the programs.

At Longwood we are always working on new programs, projects, or displays each year, a very challenging job.

Riess: Is it the feeling that each year there must be something new?

Miller: We try to improve the displays in our main conservatories each year. I think this is what makes Longwood unique in the horticultural field. I think this is what makes Longwood different than, let's say, the Missouri Botanical Gardens, or the Huntington Gardens, or any of the gardens that you may be familiar with. Imagine that every time you come to Longwood you see something slightly different, slightly changed, and I hope improved. Does this give you some idea of what Longwood is all about?

Riess: Yes, it certainly does.

Miller: Just to give you an idea of what changes we're working on right now [looking at more plans], this is a concept drawing of Longwood's future visitor center. Some of these drawings show details of the Longwood shop. Note, some day we may even sell plants.

Riess: I guess people wanted you to do that for a long time.



Miller: Yes, there has been a big demand from the visiting public to buy plants.

I discovered after working with Tommy that he enjoyed picking our staff's brains. He would make a suggestion, then he would say to our maintenance engineer, Mr. Jarvela, "Well, would that work?" or he would look at us and say, "If we use this type of tree in this area, do we have enough room?" or "What soil drainage problems would there be?" You notice that in none of these plans of Tommy's does he mention, or suggest, plant material. Every concept and drawing is strictly design.

Riess: It is interesting. Some people think that he's a great plantsman. And other people recognize that it's not his first love.

Miller: I think his true expertise in working with us in the East was in design. Back in California where he was more familiar with the plant material, he would be noted as a plantsman.

Riess: Was he on a contract, or what kind of an arrangement was there?

Miller: The financial arrangement that Longwood contracted with Mr. Church was as follows: There was a day consulting fee of \$300, with a pro-rated travel fee along with a design fee, and if needed, money was available for "additional architectural engineering."

Riess: I should think he would have enjoyed the idea that he was "working with Mr. duPont."

Miller: I think he had a great love for Longwood, because every time he came he was always in such a happy and relaxed mood. During his last visit it was very difficult for Tommy to talk, but he talked with his pen. We, the staff, received a tremendous amount of ideas from his visits. I hope we can find someone as wonderful as Mr. Church to work with in the future.

Mr. Frederick and I are going up to Hartford, Connecticut, tomorrow to interview a young man that has been recommended. We're going up to see examples of some of the landscaping that he's been doing. He's been restoring an old estate in Strawbridge, Massachusetts. We're also looking and interviewing Dr. Peter Shepherd, dean and professor of the Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania. He also spends about six months of the year in England where he has a landscape architecture practice. He has an English garden design flare for horticulture; we're all anxious to have him with us at Longwood.

Miller: [Walking outside again] Now, down on this level you can see the detail of the limestone [on the fountains].

Riess: Yes. Did Mr. duPont import these fountain pieces or did he have craftsmen here?

Miller: Mr. duPont imported these from Italy.

We have had a number of these beautiful garden ornaments donated to us. These fu dogs here at the top of the stairs at the entrance to the topiary garden were a donation to Longwood by Mr. and Mrs. Jones of Pittsburgh.

Riess: Tommy sometimes found fountains and sculptural objects for his other clients. Did he suggest things to you or spot things for your gardens?

Miller: Yes, there was a garden in Baltimore, Maryland, that had some good statuary that he was very much interested in for Longwood, but nothing ever came of it.

Riess: Did he usually have several jobs that he was doing when he was in the East?

Miller: I believe there were one or two jobs he would be working on when he came East. He would spend two or three days with us, and a couple of days with other clients [when he was here] in the early seventies.

Riess: I think he must have been very efficient.

Miller: I would say he's a very well organized person.

Riess: Without giving you a feeling that you were having to toe the line?

Miller: No, we never had the feeling of being rushed. Every job and decision at Longwood was made at an easy pace. When Tommy had a new idea, he would smile, and light up a cigarette, and relay his thoughts. Then he would pick up the pencil, and a new sheet of paper, and start putting these thoughts to action.

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Proctor Mellquist

A SUNSET EDITOR CONSIDERS CHURCH'S BROAD ARCHITECTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Interview Conducted by  
Suzanne B. Riess

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Proctor Mellquist

October 25, 1977

Interviewed in the Conference Room of the offices of Sunset Magazine

Mellquist: Although I was interested in architecture before I came to Sunset, I knew very little about landscape architecture, and it was an immense, immediate discovery. The first I met was landscape architect Doug Baylis, but I soon knew Larry Halprin and I knew Bob Royston, Ed Williams and many others as time went on.

It was very clear that in everyone's view Mr. Church was more than just the leading landscape architect, he was the revolutionary. While I think scholars today would put lots of people ahead of him and make him part of a process of change, as it came to my attention, he was the change.

I bought some land in 1951 and had Baylis design the landscaping and he quoted Church as he said what his notion was on the use of the bulldozer. He said, "Indeed, if you're going to make a mark on the land, make it with confidence. Don't fuss around with little, small marks." So we did a drastic piece of grading to the base of an oak tree and out of it created a level garden that has endured. Baylis designed it with a very bold hand.

#### 1) The Sunset, A.I.A. Awards Program

Mellquist: We've had an awards program with the American Institute of Architects, Sunset magazine has, for a long time. Tommy was on the first jury.

Riess: Is that something that started with your editorship?

Mellquist: Yes. The first round was in 1957. We had a trial run the year before with Time, Incorporated as co-sponsors. But the real thing began in 1957. And we wanted to have a landscape architect on our awards jury, and always have ever since.

Mellquist: We thought it would be a good idea to have some continuing jurors. So we gave Tommy the refusal each time. It's a bi-annual program, every two years, and in the first 9 programs, over an 18 year period, Tommy was on the jury 5 times. The other landscape architect jurors were Bob Royston, Pete Walker, Larry Halprin, Ed Williams.

Riess: Not Baylis?

Mellquist: Baylis was never on it, as I regret. The one or two times that we wanted to have him there was a conflict. But he would have been on if he hadn't died abruptly and too young.

Riess: Did Church refuse sometimes because he felt it would be better to have a different man?

Mellquist: No, never, only because he was leaving with his dear wife for Rome. It was that kind of a reason. He had an ongoing love affair with Italy and had lived there and his daughter was there. He had all these reasons to go, and maybe others.

But to give a little of Tommy's quality, in the early years of the program we would have the jury for dinner and walk around with drinks in the garden of my house. I remember Tommy had been away and he came back, and came to such a dinner. I drove him up to the house. We got out of the car and he looked around and he said, "You know, Proc, it's not as bad as I remembered it." He could only make that kind of remark out of some kind of amusement and even affection. He wouldn't be that devastating. [Laughter]

But Tommy's humor was part of his quality. I've known numbers of individuals, but not enough, who could really have no posture of self-importance, or no detectable posture of self-importance. He's a very old shoe man but funny and just a superb critic and I've been with him as he has been a critic more than any other way because we've served on five architectural juries together and served with some astonishing people.

Tommy was never in any sense dismayed, but our fellow jurors have been Charles Eames and Henry Dreyfuss, Gardner Dailey, Yamasaki, and just endless people of this quality, many of them never having met Church. He was a little bit of a surprise--people sort of focused in on him. And he was always amused by being on an architectural jury.

The national A.I.A. juries are, if I'm correct, made up only of architects. Our jury, a 7-member jury, is somewhat different. It contains 4 architects; typically, two of them former award winners of the program; one landscape architect; and one good

Mellquist: professional outside the field, or an architect who practices outside of the field--Alexander Girard was considered this way one time--but more often it's been someone like Charles Eames or Dreyfuss. And finally, one layman, who has always been a Sunset editor. For the first 8 programs, I was that editor and that juror and since then, other editors of the magazine have done it. But I have listened in from the side lines.

Riess: Eames would have been somebody who was coming from a distance. Wasn't that a major commitment on his part to come out here?

Mellquist: Well, at that time he was living in Venice, California. But other people made long journeys. In recent years, we have had one juror from one of the Pacific nations, and so we've had John Andrews from Sidney, Australia twice. Our first outlander was Robin Boyd from Melbourne. We've had Fuminiko Maki from Tokyo and Arthur Erickson from Vancouver. We had one man whose name at the moment I can't recall from Mexico City--always in those cases architects, but architects of considerable achievement.

Riess: Is it done in just a one or two-day period?

Mellquist: It's done currently in a two-day period, and we have a subjury work for a day ahead of them; two members of the 7-man jury go through and boil the entries down. Then as the jury proceeding goes on, the fastest jurors getting through go back to those rejects and return any they want for consideration. So by the time two more jurors have gone back for this, you have four negative votes on the ones that are turned down and this cuts the work load back from three days to two.

That format of the subjury was the idea of Minoru Yamasaki because the first couple of times of the program we took three days and Yamasaki said that was ridiculous and unnecessary and he said, "Here's what you should do."

Riess: When you brought this idea in in 1957 was this a bold new direction?

Mellquist: I didn't quite bring the idea in, but it was a bold new thing. No consumer publication has ever done this, or done it for so long.

We did a trial program first in 1956 with House and Home, a trade magazine then owned by Time, Inc. They wanted to look at regional architecture and this was their idea. The region to begin with in the United States, in their view, was the West, and they were a little hesitant about getting into it alone so they

Mellquist: asked us if we would do it with them, and we did. Then they went on to do various things in subsequent years. But we saw the program as a way to do us a lot of good (I mean good for ourselves as publishers) but also thought it might do some good in a public way.

So in a very tentative way we talked to the American Institute of Architects and tried it out for one year which was 1957. Then we decided that we would continue it but not every year, to let more house designs become available. So it's gone on ever since every two years.

Tommy was part of the innovative part of this program. Having a first rank man in his profession on this jury which had a majority of architects, forced the discussion of the siting of the building and forced the discussion of the development of the site. In other words, not ignoring the house beyond its wall lines, which the architects don't automatically do but sometimes do. They're awfully interested in structure and in interior space.

Tommy always began with the site and the different landscape architects on those juries subsequently--Halprin was on for the second time this year--also tend to do the same thing. They look at the site and they look at the total problem. They don't look at just the architectural challenge.

Riess: That's what they're there for, isn't it, to look at the site?

Mellquist: But Tommy was not a bad critic of architecture also. He knew just what he was doing.

I brought this 1957 bound volume of Sunset here. If you don't mind, I might make one quotation from it. Tommy was an articulate man; he was so good that we sometimes took his words down. Later we have taped these jury proceedings, though in those days we didn't, but we rephrased Tommy's language or tightened it up, and used it to write headlines sometimes.

This is an award winner by Paul Hayden Kirk (whom I saw last week in Seattle and he remarked again upon Tommy interestingly), and this is Tommy's headline for this good house. As you can see, it has a two-story garden right through the middle of the house.

Tommy says, "A highly civilized and attractive tree house, bringing back for a moment that nostalgic urge which we all have as small boys to live in a tree, which is gradually stifled by a civilization that stuffs us in a box and clamps down the lid." That's pure Church talking. Isn't that good?



Riess: That is good. This is the way he would articulate things at a meeting like that?

Mellquist: Yes, he was an immensely persuasive man, listened to.

Riess: These were high-powered architects.

Mellquist: All of these juries were fascinating. As a jury, they are unstructured initially. They elect a chairman, who in most cases doesn't really serve as chairman. Sometimes it is the strongest man in the group who takes charge, but not necessarily. As you watch, in two days they structure themselves. The leadership evolves. It always does, and you never know where it's coming from.

In recent years, there've usually been two women on the jury, and very special ones. In at least one recent jury a woman member evolved as the natural leader. Most of the jurors we quietly investigate beforehand. We don't invite them only on their reputation, but after interviewing people who know them well.

Riess: To see how they'll work?

Mellquist: Well, yes. We're very careful about not having people who make speeches. Nor having people who are so painfully shy they can't speak up, no matter how qualified. But people who can engage in argument and express themselves and are articulate. This has been interesting. Since I have been not serving on the jury I've still been in the sidelines listening in.

Riess: Does Tommy always seem to fall into the same relationship to the group no matter what the constitution of the group?

Mellquist: Tommy was more contemporary in the first two or three times he was on the jury. Much later he was considerably older than others, and I think--not that he was ever aggressive--he was a little bit quieter the last one or two times he was on the jury. But always people gather around him, ask him questions, want his opinion, listen to him, and very understandably.

Riess: A house could really be disqualified on topographic grounds?

Mellquist: Bad handling, a bad relationship to its own piece of land--not bad land, because houses go on all kinds of land not always good in configuration or relationship to views or surroundings. But I think if the house were placed on the land without much sensitivity, Church would point that out, no matter how sensational

Mellquist: the house. It was different if the house and the land were designed as a unit (which is something that this magazine has advocated forever), in which the planning begins at both the view lines and the lot lines, not at the building line, and living areas can be outdoors as well as in, and the gardens are both to be in and to view.

Riess: Were the juries more and more enlightened on that point anyway as years went by?

Mellquist: These juries were enlightened on it from the beginning; in terms of some kind of revolution in house design, it had by and large taken place. There's been a reaction, a change, since then, just as the very austere, sort of international-style houses peaked in the early fifties or some people thought they had, and were very much on the scene, and the Bay Area style which is a variant on this, using skins of wood, natural wood, also had peaked. You see less of these things today, quite a lot less. But then it was quite well understood.

What we saw as the revolution led by Church in the use of the land as living area, and the land as the extension of the floor plan of the house, this was also very well understood. Few people quarreled with it. A somewhat more drastic pushing around of the land has been popular more recently, but this is related to houses having to go on very precipitous pieces of land that are left over. There is less level land.

Riess: Has Sunset ever considered financing any award in Landscape Architecture?

Mellquist: We have. We didn't find a good way to do it. It's bad enough judging houses on the basis of photographs and a plan. We felt it wouldn't work with gardens. And we saw no way to travel a qualified jury over thousands of miles. Some day we may work out an answer.

Riess: Has Sunset a commitment to the new and experimental in design? How do you find it and encourage it?

Mellquist: We probably publish more new and experimental residential designs than other popular magazines. Our Western Home Awards program is a principal means for us to find such work. But architects also bring it to our attention directly. Our chief experimental area recently has been in energy conservation, particularly solar heating and cooling as part of the architecture of the house.

## 2) Ghirardelli Square and The Cannery

Mellquist: I had some encounter with Tommy well beyond the residential world, including things ranging from university campuses to Ghirardelli Square, which he did not design, but I walked it with him one time. I wanted his criticism on Ghirardelli Square and got it and it was interesting. I worked on the square in its planning. A friend of mine, Bill Roth, bought the square. He and I worked on the plans for it.

Riess: You mean before you called in an architect?

Mellquist: Before the architects were called in, yes, there were lengthy discussions. If you'd like to see memoranda of these talks sometime I've got them somewhere in the file. They're interesting.

But a lot of architects made a crack at the project, meaning in some cases a letter to Roth and in some cases making aerial photographs and making models.

Riess: There was a competition?

Mellquist: It wasn't a competition. A great many firms were invited to transmit a message to Roth if they wished. It was entirely up to them and eventually the Wurster office was chosen. Roth had known Bill Wurster and had great respect for him. Then subsequently only two landscape architects were considered and these were Lawrence Halprin and Tommy Church and Halprin was chosen.

Riess: I'm interrupting you, but one thing I've gathered along the way is that the architect usually brings in the landscape architect of his choice.

Mellquist: Not in this case. What the architect said was, "Here are two landscape architects, both of whom I like very much, either of whom would be splendid." It wasn't a competitive choice in the sense of anyone turning Tommy down. We thought he was marvelous, but some of the early conception was of a very complicated place with a lot of busy things going on, sort of a Tivoli, scaled-down. This lively kind of place against a grand simple place. There was some reading on Tommy as being more in the grand, simple manner and Larry more in the show-business direction.

But whatever the reasons, there later was an advisory board on Ghirardelli Square for three years and I was chairman of it, the only time I've ever been involved in anything of this kind. It was fascinating, the conflicts out of which things were resolved, because there was a difference of view at all times, often not just either-or, but maybe five ways to go.

Riess: The committee involved the landscape architect and the architect?

Mellquist: On the board normally were Bill Wurster and usually his partner, Donn Emmons, Warren Lemmon, president of Ghirardelli Square, myself, Halprin, occasionally John Matthias. Do you know John or his work?

Riess: No.

Mellquist: He did all the new buildings in Ghirardelli Square, except Señor Pico, and he was Bill Roth's personal architect, and he was earlier mine. He was somewhat involved. Also on the board were the head of the Redevelopment Agency who died a few years ago, Justin Herman; and the planning director of SPUR, who later went to San Diego; and then a couple of people that were very knowledgeable in rental properties and how to develop income. Bill Roth went with the State Department late in 1962 and that was the only reason I was chairing those meetings. I was his representative because he was away.

I groped around for outside criticism beyond this design group, and Mr. Church was one of those who could give me some. He liked Halprin's lighting very much. It was sort of a spherical, taped globe that's on lighting poles all through Ghirardelli Square and was, I think, Larry's invention. Tommy thought it was correct and cheerful and also effective in illumination. He pretty much liked the traffic patterns. It was multiple level, a 10 split-level garage, with a 3-level roof that became the plaza, and people had to move through it and yet it had to be efficient with alternate ways to go both ramp and stairs. All these things were achieved.

A long time ago I had a conversation, probably over a martini with Tommy--or a negroni or whatever that odd Italian drink is that he likes--and I asked him of all these marvelous people that had gone through his drafting room, which ones did he particularly respect and which ones had certain outstanding characteristics. Tommy wasn't one to put down any of them. He was very respectful of Halprin, what he did in Ghirardelli Square. But he emphatically said Baylis. My recollection of this discussion was only that there was a kind of pared-down edited simplicity in Baylis's work, and he felt a great sympathy with it.

Riess: So you didn't pursue it further than that?

Mellquist: If I did I don't recall it.

Riess: To get back to Ghirardelli Square then, was there very much reconstruction of that area?



Mellquist: You mean to achieve it?

Riess: Yes.

Mellquist: It was a hollow square of buildings and on the uphill street there were three, the clock tower being on the corner. On the lower street there was an old power house and above it and catty-corner to the street, because it was built before the streets were built, so it didn't have to be right angles, there was the old woolen mill. Then there was a big wooden building, a box factory, which was the only building removed and Señor Pico Restaurant is now on that site. Then there was a little building on Larkin that's still there, now an Italian restaurant (Modesto Lanzone). There was a sort of courtyard in the center.

Well, the basic scheme to make the square work: That courtyard was dug out, a big excavation was made, the box factory was removed, and then a 10-split level garage, meaning a 5-story building, was put in this hole. The roof of the building on the uphill side in three levels was the future plaza and that building is the garage and it's completely concealed. You don't see it but it's there and it's 10-split levels. It holds a lot of cars and it's not one of the great achievements of the Wurster office, in the opinion of those who have ever driven large cars into it. Most likely it's one of the worst garages for a large wheel-base car in California. For a compact car, a little car, it's fine.

What was given Halprin were these established buildings, old and new, and this parking structure's roof. He had to work out access to the different streets, and meet the challenge of moving people in and out and having this whole place be a visually interesting experience. Larry likes to use the word "choreography," and there is a sort of informal action that is part of the pleasure of this sort of public place, how people move and what they're doing. There were places to sit. The big fountain was designed really as a big circular seat at two levels. It's always worked that way, for children and for others.

Riess: Having plants in pots and seasonal changes, that decorative scheme--

Mellquist: That was done with some help from people at Sunset in an advisory way. It's gone on. I remember arguments with Halprin: I felt that his pots that contained the trees were too big, were out of scale with the trees that they were to hold and he, of course, disagreed. But on the whole, the planting has done well. The plant boxes--big concrete tubs--were very good in scale and there was a lot of root room so the trees have gotten some size. They contract for changes of plant color in shallow planters. It's an expense but it's an expense that they've carried out for many years.

Riess: Was the lighting in the trees Halprin?

Mellquist: I believe all of that was pretty much Halprin--Halprin and people associated with him. Unlike Tommy, he's always had a rather large office and a lot of talent around. Tommy has tended to have a rather tight office in the time I've known him.

Riess: Okay, so what we're really saying is that Tommy thought it was--

Mellquist: Well, he was tolerant of the good work of his associates and made no bones about it, but he got a kick out of this. He thought it was a good achievement.

Tommy went on then and did the competitive development, the Cannery. The Cannery, coming on as an echo to Ghirardelli Square, right on its heels, did not have quite as good a group of old buildings, or as roomy a site, didn't have the hollow court possibility.

But Tommy built a connecting street on one side of the Cannery and the street was level and you enter down stairs from Beach Street. He made this street into theater. The street musicians had a better go there than they did in Ghirardelli Square, although both places were the oncoming of street music and street performances, street juggling. All of this street entertainment came out of, in effect, the landscape design and somewhat the ownership policy of both of these places. But the experience in both places is similar.

Tommy had, I think, a little more design opportunity. He had a single large level space to work with. He closed off the waterfront side with a glass wall. It's a wind shelter. It works very well. Tommy had a lot of fun with it. I can't remember ever asking Halprin about it. Larry, while he's less tolerant perhaps than Tommy, in other respects he worships Tommy; at least in his conversation with me he always has so indicated.

### 3) Sunset Magazine Gardens

Mellquist: When this piece of land was acquired by the Lane family for Sunset and they decided to build this Sunset building, it looked like a big act of confidence, which it was, but it was also an enormous risk. Publishing offices usually only own their typewriters. They don't own the printing press. They don't own anything. To have Lane Publishing go into this sizable thing at the scale Sunset was then--revenues weren't that big, though Sunset was making it--it was a staggering conception.

Mellquist: Thomas Church was the only choice to design the garden, lay it out, think it out, which he did.

Riess: Because he had the prestige, or the capability?

Mellquist: Prestige was no doubt a piece of it, but it was capability.

One joke about this building grounds is that if Disneyland is 5/8ths scale, this building is about 9/8ths scale, or maybe 10/8ths scale. It looks residential, but it's a little bit more. The garden is in design rhythm with these buildings, and the paths that are nice, pedestrian paths are really designed to take trucks and do a great deal of work with machines, all of this thought through by Church. The trucks are not in evidence normally, and it is pedestrian, but the scale is more the scale of some pedestrian areas on campuses or in parks where service vehicles must come in at intervals.

There was some disagreement and Tommy didn't win all the contests: There's an interior patio which you walked around a bit ago in this building. (And there's one in the newer building across the street that's similar, but Church had nothing to do with the one across the street.) Church designed this fully-enclosed outside patio with brick paving and with some rather geometric treatment.

Larry Lane, who came from the Middle West and who had made California his personal discovery, wanted this to be a very California building. Larry Lane couldn't stand bricks. They were the skin material of the Middle Western house. So the design for the patio was thrown out and later a new design was achieved with Tommy very much involved but also with the thinking of the magazine brought in. The patio was paved with adobe bricks. It's been so paved since 1951, and it's worked very well. Tommy himself liked it. But it was a different direction than Tommy would have taken.

Riess: Well, he does like a certain amount of conflict and tussle over the design, doesn't he? Maybe that overstates it, but he's not happy with a client that doesn't really get engaged.

Mellquist: I've never been his client and haven't really observed him in a client relationship very much. It's clear he only likes this kind of engagement and he had it here.

There are a couple of ideas about this place that I discussed with him one time. Some people here felt that there was a need for change in these gardens. There've been a million people through



Mellquist: the doors here in the last 26 years, mostly just "drop in." But a lot of people visit here on business and they are potential clients or advertisers or consultants, and they come here again and again, and we thought it would be good to remodel this garden.

Tommy discussed one idea with me. It never happened, and with the drought it's unlikely to ever happen, but it was to put in the far side of the big lawn a lake a little less than an acre in size about 10 inches deep, and with a bridge to a small island in the lake from the far side, and some structure on the island.

As Tommy put it, it would give people a place to go, a reason to walk. It would be a very agreeable and kind of placid interruption, but it would also be cool and attractive in arid California. That was not done but it was one piece of his thinking.

He had another idea that I kicked around with him. Because you can't increase buildings any longer, anywhere, without in some way meeting an increased parking requirement, and this piece of land is big enough to meet almost any parking requirement, but it would use up the garden and the garden is part of the whole scheme here, Tommy figured a way to put a parking structure in.

We have a parking lot on the Middlefield Road side of this building which is a long rectangular space at grade and Tommy said that there would be a way to put in a hanging garden that would really be a parking structure, but you wouldn't see it. Essentially what he said you'd do, you'd drop the ground level a little bit. (I don't remember how many feet, not many.) Then you'd put in a concrete lid, supported by posts. There is a masonry wall on Middlefield about 6 feet high. The lid would be at the height of the masonry wall. Then you'd have 60 inches or so of automobiles standing above the wall top. So you'd have trees that head out over the top of the masonry wall by 60 or more inches. Some trees are there now. More would go in. With ramps you'd get about 80% as many cars on the upper level. You'd get about 180% of the present parking on two levels.

It would be a parking structure open-sided and surrounded and interrupted with trees. From the public streets you'd only see the trees. But it would work efficiently, and with this climate you don't need walls or anything else. It's a simple workable idea which we didn't do, but someday it might surface again.

We took a different direction. We acquired land across the street and built another building which has grown and is now larger than this one, and we've acquired still more land, so we may not need to load this parcel that much.



Mellquist: But that was one time I saw Tommy's head working. He had in mind a lot of different things, and he knew we didn't want to present to the world a parking lot facade. We were dealing with gardening and we'd just as soon maintain a garden facade.

#### 4) Santa Cruz, Berkeley, and Stanford Campus Planning

Mellquist: Let me ask you a question. Have you interviewed Bill Roth about U.C. Santa Cruz?

Riess: No, I haven't.

Mellquist: I talked to Jon Rice of KQED several years ago about doing a 25 minute documentary on Tommy which would be interviews with him and walks with him. I wanted to see if we couldn't do a lot of it on U.C. Santa Cruz and U.C. Berkeley and Stanford. He was related to all three in different ways.

I remember after Larry Livingston's planning office did the search and found the site at Santa Cruz, then the Regent's committee talked to a number of architects and finally selected one firm of supervising architects. (They later changed to a different firm.)

Riess: Warnecke?

Mellquist: It was Warnecke initially, and later it was Kump. But somehow they couldn't site the university. They just couldn't handle this.

How it got to Tommy I don't know, but Tommy designed the layout of this multiple college university. This is my reading on it from what I've heard for a long time. He placed the colleges and he worked out the circulation system and in effect he worked out the nature of the place, because the colleges have to interact, they can't all have separate total facilities--the performing arts is a single thing, the basic core library. But that was a considerable achievement, or maybe a disaster, because not everybody likes the university, but in any event it's an achievement. A lot of people think it is marvelous.

Riess: That's really interesting--they were stumped by all that potential.

Mellquist: Yes, but he was the one that got around being stumped. This is my recollection of talks with Bill Roth who was on the Regents committee dealing with such matters as architecture.

Mellquist: I remember the achievement of a new entry to the Berkeley campus, which must be 15 years ago, or a little more, when the Student Union went in and Halprin designed the entrance and those plane trees in double rows coming down.

I've always assumed that Tommy chose Halprin for that because Tommy was the supervising landscape architect for the campus.

Riess: So he endorsed Halprin's ability to do that big space?

Mellquist: Halprin designed it, and Vernon De Mars worked on the buildings there. This is my dim memory working, but I still always related this to Tommy's overall supervision of the campus.

And the same way at Stanford--again, this is recollection--but Tommy told me that initially he was talking to Dr. Wallace Sterling, just on the backs of envelopes, about how to clean up the happenstance development of Stanford, that patchwork of all sorts of things. There'd been splendid order in the original Olmsted plan, but so much time had passed with short term decisions. And the great Stanford man-planted forest had not been continued.

Out of Tommy's envelope sketches came a new circulation plan which isn't complete because of the interruption barricade of the old sorority-fraternity district. Otherwise, the new circulation plan surrounds the campus. Private cars don't go very far in the middle. Parking is tucked in under the trees. A lot of new forest is going in on the new residential side of the campus, and order is slowly being regained. It's a 10 to 20-year scheme.

I drive the campus almost every day going home or coming to work and I've been watching this happen for a long time and I attribute anything that's good about it to Tommy. I think he had his own kind of love affair with these universities.

##### 5) Sunset Public Demonstration Gardens

Mellquist: Sunset magazine has, as you know, done some work in public parks with demonstration gardens. Our first one was at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum in Arcadia and we did one at Tucson Mountain Park outside of Tucson. We finally faced up to one in Golden Gate Park, and it was very funny.

Mellquist: We asked the obvious people to collaborate if they would in designing these gardens. The people we asked were Tommy, Doug Baylis, Ed Williams, Bob Royston, and Larry Halprin, probably the five leading landscape architects in Northern California at that time, and they all knew each other awfully well. Sunset's agreement as it had been in the previous demonstration gardens, was we would pay their fees, and in return, the city would give us design control. We would finally be the client.

We weren't sure how to begin. We had a couple of meetings and finally we decided that each of the landscape architects would come up with a notion for the whole thing as loosely done as they wanted. We had a meeting in Halprin's office and they were all there. And I was there and one or two other people from Sunset. Everybody took part in a bull session and martinis and probably a buffet supper, and then the presentations began, and Church said he would be last.

This was about as competitive a thing maybe as the five of them had ever been in, because here was this beautiful tract of land in the Strybing Arboretum, and money was available, these gardens would be built, and all or some of them or maybe only one of them would do the design.

Riess: It hadn't been established that you'd have all five?

Mellquist: No, and no fees had been paid at this point. This was just coming up with what to do with this challenge.

I forget now in what order they made their presentation. I remember details about different ones. These were all really very able people. I think one of them didn't want to make a presentation at that state, I think it was Baylis and he held back. But finally at the end Tommy came up and what he did blew them all out of the ball park. His scheme was so correct to our standpoint as clients, and really was correct to the others.

Tommy in effect said, let's do five things and let's organize the space as a walking experience, and the experiences should differ.

He had sketches to show where things would go because there were big trees and the land moved around (it was higher and lower) and he had all that in mind. But my memory of this, and others might have a different memory, is that we liked Tommy's scheme and we decided we would assign different people of these five in the room. (This didn't happen at that meeting but shortly thereafter.)

Mellquist: We had enough money we thought to maybe develop three of these five. We needed an overall supervising landscape architect and so I went to see Tommy and said, "This is what we'd like to do and we'd like you to be overall supervising landscape architect."

He said, "Great, except I won't be it."

I said, "Okay, among us we've got all the talent we need. Who shall we get?"

He thought for a moment and he said, "Well, my nominee is Ed Williams."

So I went to see Ed and Ed said, "Great, I'll do it," which meant that Ed's office got the large fees, because they did the working drawings. They did this revision but the design remained with the designers.

So the three we chose were Ed Williams, Larry Halprin, Thomas Church for the first stages. Baylis had still not come up with anything that we liked the look of and Royston--I forget what our reasoning was there.

Then Williams, Halprin, and Church each came up with their individual designs. These were built and later some minor things were done and added, always with Ed Williams' office as supervisors. Royston never did come into it very much or at all. Baylis designed a garden work center that was built.

After a dozen years we pulled out of the Strybing project; our name is no longer associated with it. We were interested in change and also had limited time to put against public projects.

#### 6) Sunset: The Lane's View

Riess: I am interested in what your mandate was as editor--when the Lanes hired you, whether landscape architecture and city planning and environmental design were important to them.

Mellquist: The Lane's view of the magazine was a bit more simplistic than than history has since made it. They felt that the magazine was for helping people take advantage of the western climate, western geography, western opportunities. It was a mix here of, in part, mild winters and mild summers, and in part a kind of innovative society or fresh society, different from the rest of the country.



Mellquist: They wanted a magazine that was a handbook to serve these western differences, a handbook that would offer encouragement or ideas for people that they couldn't find in the national press. They were looking for someone about my age and generation because they wanted to make a change. They didn't hire me to be editor. They hired me to see if I could be editor and it took a couple of years, but that's so long ago...

The man I followed, Walter Doty, he and I became good friends. He was himself a gardener and had lived in suburbia, made gardens in several places, knew Tommy very well. Baylis designed one garden for him. He hired Baylis to be on the magazine at one time. I learned a great deal from Walter--more from him than anyone else initially. Under his direction Sunset was the first publication really getting into landscape architecture and how it could be used in a residential way.

7) House Beautiful and Elizabeth Gordon

Mellquist: An important thing to Tommy, and possibly unfortunate for Sunset, took place in 1950 or thereabouts.

Elizabeth Gordon, editor of House Beautiful, made some sort of ongoing deal with Thomas Church. She was publishing his gardens and she admired him enormously. She was anti-the international school in architecture and very pro-Frank Lloyd Wright. She was the lustiest, and in many ways, most effective person in the coffee-table magazine business, House Beautiful and House and Garden. She carried on through the fifties and the beginning of the sixties when she was fired. But in those years she worked closely with Tommy and published a great many of his gardens.

He tended to have rather well-heeled clients. His gardens were spacious and well-installed.

Oh, he did a little bit of work on a smaller scale now and then with a landscape contractor down here in Los Altos. He designed his garden.

Riess: Floyd Gerow.

Mellquist: Also, he did a really marvelous group of gardens for Eichler in a subdivision that I think was called Greenmeadows. [1953] Those gardens would now be 23 or 24 years of age and we published them in Sunset at that time.

Mellquist: We didn't publish very much of Tommy's work, though we were very much aware of it. There would be single things that would come up, or there'd be houses we were doing and the gardens were by Church. But we didn't focus in on the gardens and I didn't want to have too many gardens that were up in excessively spacious and very expensive scale because our readership, though it included those people, was predominantly people who had a lot less money and a lot less land.

Riess: That's interesting about Elizabeth Gordon's role in all that.

Mellquist: I only met her a couple of times and didn't understand her too well but she had a genuine head of steam and she had opinions and I agreed with an awful lot of her opinions. I certainly agreed with her coming in on Church and Wright although at the same time I got a kick out of the geometric austerity side of architecture. I didn't think they were in absolute collision.

Riess: Did Church have a contract arrangement with House Beautiful? Or, in fact, with Sunset at any time?

Mellquist: I don't know about House Beautiful but I doubt if Tommy had a contract. Contracts are rare in magazine work. Tommy did not have any relationship with Sunset that was contractual. He did Sunset's garden at Strybing.

#### 8) The Message in Sunset Magazine Today

Riess: I think of Sunset as a magazine with a message.

Mellquist: A lot of that's been evolving and still is. We don't take postures or take stands or campaign very much but I think the world is changing in the direction we've been working on for a long time.

Riess: Then I am interested in what the landscape architecture message is.

Mellquist: We think that among the choices people have, along with living in condensed housing situations, high-rise, or whatever they may be, there's satisfaction in getting your hands in the dirt. There's satisfaction in all kinds of handicrafts. Our cooking pages deal with cooking the hard way, not with short-cuts, not with convenience. But with the art of cooking.

Mellquist: The process of making something is a satisfaction independent of the results. We feel this in gardening and horticulture. I think myself that there comes a point when you want professional help. I think one of these places for most of us is in designing a house, and in a differing way, in designing a garden. But then you can--some of us--can execute some of the house, if the design's good, if you're guided in the practical engineering.

Farming on the city lot is here today for all sorts of people. We've been dealing with that for a long time. But it's dangerous for a magazine to go a little too far. If you do, suddenly your circulation may weaken and sometimes you cannot recover from a circulation reversal. You have to keep your circulation healthy.

Riess: Because you're making too many demands of people?

Mellquist: Or you're giving them demands that too many of them don't want and not giving them enough that they can do. We play it carefully by ear all the time and it works. But we don't dare have the circulation signals go down hill. Our circulation signals are very good. The magazine is healthy but we run scared.

Riess: Month by month, though, you gage what people are responding to?

Mellquist: We have a lot of subjective means of gaging, hardly any objective ones, but we have a lot of people who are out listening and talking to people.

My wife's just back from visiting our son in Vermont. He was a good Californian but he loves Vermont and he's taken the subsistence route. He builds his own buildings, grows all of his own food. He gets all the protein as well as the vegetables and the rest of it. It amuses me. He reads Sunset with interest and finds some of it applies to the farm.

Riess: I'm sure it must please you. He won't be there forever anyway.

Mellquist: I don't know. I think maybe he will. For awhile he didn't have a dollar income, but he's been out of college almost eight years and he's built buildings on two farms. On the first farm the weather was too difficult. He's on one now where the weather's milder.

Riess: Why is it always Vermont that people go to?

Mellquist: I don't know why so many people go there. John went to college there. He went to Dartmouth, in Hanover. He also married a girl from upstate New York who doesn't like the Far West very well. But there are people like him all around, the subsistence world--and Vermont is a terrible world for profitable farming.

Mellquist: There's a lot of it going on differently here and we're developing a modest readership in Sunset of people who are recently married or living together who are maybe on the land, or maybe into the handcraft world, or who are into it to some extent. They're finding in Sunset things they can make use of, even though it's their parents who are the people who buy Cadillac Sevilles and other things that are advertised in Sunset. It's the parents that pay our bills. We know quite a bit about the magazine's circulation--we tend to have people that have gone a little further in college than a national matching magazine.

Among our readers are people involved in city government and politics. Our readers include business leadership in cities and also in small towns. We have very high circulation in college campuses in the faculty, which is interesting. I would guess our circulation among faculty at Berkeley probably is comparable to Time Magazine, perhaps larger than Time's.

Riess: Is there a population of landscape architects and architects who go along with this idea of them providing the shell, and somebody else doing the work?

Mellquist: Yes, and not everybody can go beyond the shell but some people can--a lot of people can. We publish case histories all the time of achievement, and we like to keep it at the scale of a room or the improvement of a room. Once in awhile we'll have a whole house but not that many--although we did an essay a few months ago on what is called the pre-cut house and we had case histories of eight families who had achieved the house. (We looked into maybe 30.) We told in the text of our article about many families who had failed and why. They either got bored or got tired. It was too much of an undertaking.

#### 9) A New Pattern of Living

Riess: Please comment on life-style cycles you've lived through in 20 years with Sunset.

Mellquist: I think of cycle in a circular sense as going around and maybe moving on to an overlapping cycle. I think that the times I've been on Sunset have been times of--well, various kinds of unrest, much of the unrest healthy, increasingly.

I think there was an American pattern to living in Suburbia, living in houses, or even in apartments, that was an aping of the manor house. You think of a pretentious dining room, with a door



Mellquist: to the kitchen, and chairs around the table, and serving from left to right, and the housewife changing roles and being the maid, and getting up and then sitting down again. For many years that whole rigamarole got totally thrown out with the coming of the open kitchen. The kitchen might be around the corner sometimes, but visible, no doors.

Then you look at the old front garden as an entry path from the street with neat plants on each side, an echo of a manor house, and in effect useless and it took a lot of maintenance.

Riess: But it signified prosperity?

Mellquist: It signified prosperity or signified a certain style. It was the accepted way to do things.

What happened in Tommy's time, but done by many people including many architects, was to discard this manor house aping. You gave the house what was called a reverse plan. The living area was not on the street; it was on the side or back. And the landscape made an agreeable appearance to the street but often was very low maintenance. The back was a living area in some cases, several living areas, and in extreme cases, anything you could do inside the house you could do outside, given the correct area for it.

All of these things came along, changing the way we lived in houses for those who discovered them. Not everyone did. Mass housing around the country varies very much. There are still comparatively few reverse plan subdivisions in the Middle West. There are some in the South and they're taking advantage of what is, for much of the year, a moderate climate. I say this as a generality only confirmed by my own observations. But almost every year in some different states I hike through subdivisions, just to see what regional difference is in evidence elsewhere in the country, because I'm quite aware of it here.

I got to a lot of different places in Illinois and Wisconsin because I have reasons to get to those states, and in Massachusetts and Vermont, because I have reasons to get to Vermont every year, and occasionally other places--last year, Mississippi. Some of the same change is coming, but it's lagging. It's also lagging in the cold winter areas where people can't do some of the things we can do in the West.

But at least this aping of the manor is ending. Tommy was one of the ones that threw it out.

Riess: Before we stop, is there anything else you might say about California landscape design compared to the rest of the country, then (1950) and now (1977), and how Thomas Church has affected it?

Mellquist: I wouldn't want to be too profound. In my observation California leads the rest of the country in a landscaping revolution now 40 or so years old. Tommy was the leading revolutionary.

In 1950 the revolution was well underway. Today (1977) it continues but the big achievements were earlier.

Some precepts:

Land should be dealt with for appreciation and also for use. Residential land in modest and medium size plots should be part of the living plan--land plan and house plan continuations of each other, compliments of each other--with significant differences.

Changes of scale are first differences--indoors is partly cave and refuge, outdoors the sky sometimes is the ceiling, trees sometimes are. Adjacent properties and distant hills are yours to appreciate or to screen out.

Climate changes--indoor control can be almost total, outdoor control possible but always limited.

Tommy Church saw the outdoor-indoor duo as intimately mixed up with each other. He saw landscape architecture and house architecture as properly a duet, probably with landscape architecture leading. His was the large scale, the larger stage.

All of the house was fixed, its materials really dead, only its innards regularly changeable. Much or most of the landscape was alive--growing, changing, flowering, fruiting, dying.

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Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Goodwin B. Steinberg

AN ARCHITECT RECALLS JOINT PROJECTS WITH CHURCH, 1950s, 1960s

Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

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Goodwin Steinberg

May 20, 1976

Interviewed in the offices of Goodwin B. Steinberg Associates
Architects, San Jose

1) Steinberg's Architectural Training

Riess: Please tell me about your architectural practice, and the beginning of your association with Thomas Church.

Steinberg: My father was an architect in Chicago and I had worked for him for a period of years. He had an industrial practice in the City of Chicago and because of the limited land available for industry and the expanding factories, etc., the practice became one of the very methodical engineering approaches to problem-solving. From my end--I was very strong on design in school--his practice didn't have the aesthetic excitement that I wanted. Working details of new parts of hospitals, or working details of new parts of a printing plant--just limited challenge, and I finally got courage to say, "I'm going off on my own."

I had built up a fairly substantial salary and once I decided to go off on my own I didn't know whether I could keep up and maintain the same standard of living of many of the people that I was closely associated to. So, rather than just develop an architectural practice in Chicago, and because I had gone overseas from California--

Riess: You went to Berkeley to school?

Steinberg: No, I went to the University of Illinois. I had training at Illinois Institute of Technology, where Mies van der Rohe taught; and then I had graduated from the University of Illinois; and then I had training in Fontainebleau, France, under a man by the name of Jean Lebateau, who had a very different kind of philosophy.

Steinberg: Where Mies' philosophy was pure structure, and a very, very simple, clean approach to design, the man in France's approach was all mood. It had to do with whether if you go into a dining room is it good architecture if the room is dark, if you can't see the building at all but you can smell the food, you can hear music, you can see the candlelight in peoples' faces. You have a cocktail, your senses are numb--your relationship to the person you're with, these are all mood situations, and how they affect you through the atmosphere in which you are at. It's just a very different kind of approach, and it was very stimulating.

And this man also got me very stimulated on things like space--is an open space good, or is a closed space good. My background was one where I very strongly think in terms of mood, feeling, peoples' reaction to what we're doing. And it's not just sticks, stones, construction materials, and that type of approach.

So, once I decided to go off on my own I wanted to come back to California. And at the time I thought that if I do nothing but houses in these hills that would be the ultimate as far as a practice is concerned.

Coming out of Illinois you have very good basic training in architecture. I mean, you were a building specialist; you really understood the circulation through a room, the difference between a cul de sac room and a room that you had diagonal circulation through, how the furniture went into the room, how to put pictures on the walls, where to plant, the difference between windows on the short end of the room and glass on the long end of the room. And you're thinking "space" and "feeling" from architecture, but then you're also adding to it mood.

Riess: How was landscape architecture viewed at that time?

Steinberg: My training in landscape architecture wasn't. At Illinois, at I.I.T., the European training--although the man from Fontainebleau was actually a landscape architect, I had really sort of thought of landscape architecture only from my trips to, say, places like Versailles, where you had a main lounge burst like a bubble bay into the back of the room, and then you'd see landscaping in a formal sense over there. But I really wasn't exposed to landscape architecture as they practice it in California, where Tommy really, as I knew it, was the father of this kind of house relationship to grounds and your indoor-outdoor living relationship. Although I did travel to Japan and I saw the indoor-outdoor living, but not creating the moods of landscaping that Tommy did.

Riess: So prior to Tommy your solution would have been to have a landscape architect come in on the job, or would you sketch in foundation planting yourself?

Steinberg: Prior to Tommy I think that my feeling would be that I wanted my architecture to feel the ground, so that it took on somewhat of a Japanese quality where you could open the door and you could feel the space. But I might have a deck that was only five or six feet wide. I really wasn't trained for thinking of using the outdoors for living, in the same way that I was thinking of the houses's use for living.

And once you got associated with Tommy you became aware of the outdoor space for dining, the outdoor space for lounging around, swimming, tennis courts, the outdoor space for cut flowers and how cut flowers look at the different times of the year. Thinking about the "off seasons" and how a pool looks nice when it's active, and alive, but how does it look with respect to a rainy winter day? (At that time most of the pools were white-surfaced, compared to the darker surfaces now.)

So, you develop a broader line of thinking about the outdoors. But I wasn't exposed to that. I wasn't exposed to the way that Tommy thought in terms of placing buildings on sites; this was really a very nice part of my education because you can design buildings and design buildings as they orient to ground and trees and views and wind. But if you get a knoll, do you set the building on the ridge of the knoll, and parallel to it, or do you put the building on the top of it like a horseback rider, straddling the knoll? And there's just a variety of combinations of partially straddling, partly parallel.

You just develop a whole variety of ways, when you are around him, because you saw how he would try one thing, and maybe it would work, or it wasn't the best, and then you would try another thing. Getting that building adjusted to the site.

And then how to handle the automobile?

If you have the knoll you might push the building off the top and save the knoll for your outdoor activity, and the combinations of knoll, side hill, patios to use the knoll and patios to use the decks, you're sloping around on the site to find ways of adjusting.

2) California: Sunset Magazine and Walter Doty

Steinberg: Tommy had great ability to teach, too. I mean, as a young architect I came into this area...

Riess: Yes, how did you come into contact with him?

Steinberg: I think that when I first started I came out and I really wanted to do good architecture, and it was very paramount in my mind to do it.

Riess: And Mies was your model, and the man at Fontainebleau.

Steinberg: At Illinois you had a whole group of different kinds of teachers. The background was how to plan, how to put in a building, how to respect neighborhoods, vertical and horizontal circulation problems, groups of buildings. So you had a pretty good basic training, but there was a link there [missing] in the development of buildings to site.

I think I came out here and started in on homes and I saw that Sunset magazine did a great deal to help young architects, and young landscape architects. And I went over there and I got to know Walter Doty.

Riess: When was this?

Steinberg: Around 1953, 1954. And Walter Doty and I became very good friends so I did a small house for Sunset magazine in the Oakland Home and Garden Show, and at that time I worked with Doug Baylis, who since passed away, and who was a student, or who worked for, Tommy. And I got a little touch of landscaping. But Walter Doty was very, very sensitive to the role of the landscape architect, indoor-outdoor living, barbequing, that whole relationship.

Riess: How was he available to you?

Steinberg: The whole Sunset magazine operation was very helpful to young architects and young landscape architects. They thrived on publishing the work of these people and we got publicity so that you get more work. It was a very healthy marriage. At that time a young person that had \$5,000 could go up and tie up a lot and build a \$25,000 house and lot package, and it was very charming. You can't do that today. But you could have a very modest income and still have a private home.

Steinberg: I first got started in that direction with some help from Walter Doty, and I became aware of the landscape architect's role. At that time I worked with Doug Baylis, and I worked with Larry Halprin, I worked mainly with those two. Both Larry and Doug had worked for Tommy, and I sort of liked what Tommy was doing, so I went up and introduced myself.

3) First Job with Thomas Church

Steinberg: I had a house, a higher-budget house than I'd had in the past, and I wasn't sure exactly how to put it on the site. I went up and I talked to Tommy and asked if he'd be interested. At the time he was pretty busy, but he was very warm, and very kind: as a young architect you're sort of coming with your hat in your hand, introducing yourself to a person who was extremely well respected and had a whole group of people that he had trained already out, yet you knew him 20 years the second you met him. He made you feel very comfortable.

But he told me he was very busy and that he didn't know whether he could handle it, but "maybe." So I just kept after him. I said, "It's a very important client to me. Would you do it?" He said, "Well, okay." I think that was probably the George Long house.

Riess: So the idea of having Church had come from you rather than the client?

Steinberg: No, actually in the George Long house Tommy was brought in before I was hired and did a site development plan. And I don't now remember whether that was the first house that Tom and I worked on together or not.

In the Long house I think the people had bought the lot and they had certain requirements for their house, and before I was in the picture he had made a study. And I don't know whether they had made the initial contact and I met him that way. But I know one thing, that his way of handling me was one of very gentle consideration for my point of view; even if I was wrong, he was very, very gentle. And now I'm not sure just which way it went on the Long house.

But anyway, he would get the client requirements and try to lay out the site. He wouldn't go into the details of the building, so that some of the parts had to be reworked; working with the

Steinberg: client, rework and reshape it, and use your mind and imagination to make it work, and then go back and rework it with him. And he was concentrating on views from certain rooms; how the entrance was set up--whether you walked around a tree or through certain trees to get to the entrance; service areas. You might not have enough space between the parts of the building to accomplish it exactly that way, but then you'd rework that.

Riess: So he was working from the point of view of the people looking out from inside.

Steinberg: Well, he was really thinking of how you live in the house as well as how the different parts of the house oriented to the outside. The entrance relates to the outside. The living room and dining room activities relate to the outside. The kitchen relates to the outside and service. The garage, the distance from there to the kitchen. He had very carefully thought out the flow of how you move from outside to inside. Then he probably lumped the whole mass of inside in one chunk that allocated approximate areas where he thought things would go. And then it took a close working back and forth between the architect and the landscape architect to make sure that the client's requirements as the insides began to fill out continued to relate to the outside as he had visualized it in concept.

4) "Related, Not Continuous," Gardens

Riess: How much of a problem were materials when it came to articulating your idea of the house surfaces and his of the garden surfaces?

Steinberg: Well, he, in most cases, would set up--you see, you can have design work two ways. You can have it work where you can get a harmonious blend just in terms of dress, for example: you can take a tan outfit, and you can stay all in tans, and not break the pattern, or you can come along and work with more contrast, you might have a black skirt and a color contrast blouse [describing what interviewer is wearing] and you can contrast.

He generally would work so that the grounds flowed with the building, but his material choice might contrast. For example, if we were using a brown floor tile in the living room and it carried to the window wall, he might contrast it and use concrete on the outside, as compared to if we had--many of our houses have very strong grid patterns, and we'd bring that tile to the outside and continue that through.

Steinberg: As a general rule his design was so strong that to carry that [the house] system through was not a normal way for him to work. It was generally a Church garden related to the house. But the Church garden satisfied the client's requirements; in other words, it had a Church signature that you could feel but the basic requirements of that garden were exactly as that client wanted to live.

Riess: And this didn't present problems to you, the architect?

Steinberg: On most houses it didn't present problems. On some houses, where you have a strong vocabulary, it could present a problem. In a case like that, he would adjust and work it out. But as a general rule he contrasted the inside with the outside.

For example, most houses would be just geometric because the structural materials are geometric, where his grounds would shift and go into soft curves. Because you do contrast somewhere along the line, whether you contrast at the house line, or you carry the geometry out into the patios and then carry the geometry to a degree in the grounds, somewhere from the grounds to the hills beyond you're switching to a very natural, flowing relationship with the building. Generally on most of his buildings the contrast switched from the nature and the curve at the building line.

Riess: In an article by Michael Laurie he said that in 1933 Thomas Church wrote to the effect that the small garden could not be natural if it was to serve as an extension of the house.

Steinberg: That's a little bit maybe what I was saying. I sort of hedged when I talked about the house getting through as an extension. You could really feel it, he didn't work with you that way. He really extended the natural landscape into the garden and up to the house, rather than taking the house and extending the living area of the house outside and then making the transition at the end of his line to nature. He brought nature to his place and then stopped it.

Riess: That's very interesting.

Steinberg: That doesn't mean that you can't do it both ways. You can. As an architect you're really trying to move it out. I have worked with others. I have one very important house that I worked with Doug Baylis on for that very reason because I had certain materials in that house that I wanted to move out, and I felt that Tommy would not move it in quite the same way, he would be moving it the other way. A line that I wanted to move to "there," he would want to move "here." But whatever we've ever done together I have just loved.

Steinberg: It's interesting. I've never heard him say that [referring to quote above] but I've just felt it. He really verbalized it there.

5) Space

Steinberg: Also, there are other things. Space is a very intangible thing in architecture. People look at photographs and they can't feel the space. They only can look at the detail, the bookshelves, the fireplace: most architectural photographs, if you look at them, will have some accent item, a piece of furniture, a piece of sculpture. When they photograph a building interior they are photographing a detail, and then the building behind. It's very difficult to photograph the space, and the space sets the mood.

Tommy's space, on outside work, was incomparable. Nobody touches his outside space. So many people would come along, and they'd have a very nice yard, and they'd stick a couple of trees in the middle of that open space because it would give shade or it would do certain things.

He would take very bold, strong effects and leave some very open holes, and then surround them with trees in a certain way so that you had a degree of magnificence in the way that space held together, and if you put a tree in it it would clog it. I don't think many people really understood how to handle the outdoor space really well, and Tommy's outdoor space I think is one of his great fortes. You see his details and his pools and his shapes and his curves, they are photographable, but his feeling for space is not so photographable. And that's what you feel; you feel a special elegance.

Riess: He saved the planting for the last, didn't he?

Steinberg: He planted at the end, but he knew, when he shaped those curves and things like that, he was feeling the three-dimensional space at that level, even though he might have used Monterey pines to form the wall of space or he might have used a variety of other types of trees to form the wall of the space--maybe oaks, maybe birch, anything. But he might open up a space and give you a great big lawn area and patio in it, and then you'd come through another area and you may have it just loaded with birch and you're going through a tunnel of birch trees. You'd come out this tunnel at the other end, and it would explode a certain way. You might

Steinberg: come through a tunnel and go into the house and then come out and have a touch of tree and then the space would explode. It was not just materials, plant materials, but he was really shaping rooms out there the way that he did it, in flowing ways: it would open up and curve and widen and narrow.

6) Helping the Client Express Himself

Steinberg: Tommy really looked the client over so that he had a feel that the client really wanted what he had to offer. If the client was going to change or bungle or go off and not carry it through he tried to anticipate that and eliminate that. He wanted a client who really cared.

Riess: You can pick those people out?

Steinberg: Not always, but you can to a degree.

Riess: Sounds like a good skill.

Steinberg: He had a marvelous faculty for understanding people and what they wanted. One of the beautiful things about Tommy was that he had great flexibility to design for almost any client, and could do it within a framework that didn't violate his own integrity, and this is not easy.

It's like a client coming in and saying, "Give me a Colonial home." Some architects would say, "Absolutely not, I won't do it."

And another architect might say, "What do you mean by a Colonial home? Do you like a red brick two-story house with a white portico?" And then the architect may take the time to explain to that person, say, "Wait, just a minute, if you do the traditional Colonial home, you'll have a living room in the front, facing forward, and a dining room in the front, facing forward. You've got a piece of property that has a road in the front. Yet the ground drops off in the rear and you've got an exquisite view over the valley looking out at the rear. Do you really want to take that living room and dining room and face the front where it would almost be looking into the hill, or do you want to take that and work it another way?

"Or maybe you would rather go out and find a site that fits the house you have in mind." But in most California situations you start with a beautiful site and then you try to take advantage

Steinberg: of it. You tell them, step by step, teach them, how you can really make that building fit the site and then you might adapt some of the qualities from the traditional. "I don't really want all glass walls on the back. I want a greater amount of closure so that I can hang pictures on the walls, but I'll still have windows."

He had the skill to work with people, to teach them, to help them understand, and gain their respect, and yet please them.

Riess: That sounds reasonable. Is it frequent that architects deliver ultimatums to clients?

Steinberg: Ninety-five percent of the architects, if somebody would come to them and say, "Give me a Colonial home," would pass that client off without really digging into it to find out and understand what it's all about. You have to establish communication. You bring your prejudices into a situation and you don't take the time to develop a method of communication, to really understand. Sometimes a client who seems so rigid, once you start to work with them, talk with them, develop communication, they are not rigid. Most people are pretty open for two-way communication; they are looking for something or they wouldn't have come to me, or they wouldn't have come to Tommy.

Riess: Can you contrast the way other landscape architects work with the way Tommy works?

Steinberg: Some people, like salesmen, you can find some salesmen who have the patience and care and try to understand you and please you, and they sell you by finding out what you want. Other salesmen are very powerful and they just steamroller over you, and you buy.

Tommy was not pressure. He had the ability to find out what you wanted, and to do it within a highly principled system of his own. He really didn't compromise his own integrity. But he found common grounds for your ideas and his approach to architecture.

You have to really reach in. People don't always tell you what they want. (People will say, "I'm a reader, I never watch television," but if you incidentally give them a television in their bedroom they really won't mind. In fact, they are avid television watchers.) A person may say, "I have a limitless budget," and they have a budget that is plenty limited, and the other way around. You have to feel and understand whether they want a small-budget garden or they really want this very large, extensive program they are asking for.

Steinberg: What do they really want? You have a way of smoking it out, and you do it with humor, so it's not a tense, dramatic crisis when they are giving you conflicting, impossible situations. With a quip you can make them realize that they have given you a ridiculous, impossible problem. And they can come back and say, "I can see what you mean, Mr. Church. Perhaps my two requirements are in conflict." You can loosen them up and open them up.

But he was a very whole person. To be a good architect, or a good landscape architect, you aren't just playing with design forms, you are shrewdly understanding people, and he did, he really understood people.

Riess: Sounds like you were in on these discussions often.

Steinberg: Oh, I'm projecting some of my own experience into this. But out of all the professionals that I've ever seen in architecture or landscape architecture, I really admire him the most, because he did everything with kindness and yet was very strong. He never got hung up in tension with a client. He could make the client happy and go in the way that he thought was proper for the client and he was right in his judgment as to what he thought the client really wanted. And he led, in a strong way, but a kind way.

7) Reputations, Principles, and Other Intangibles

Steinberg: Generally I'd call Tommy in on fine homes where I was really concerned with the client. I'd try too--when I first started I'd do small homes and I'd work with the client on the architecture, and the landscaping and the interior design, but when you've got a larger home and it is elegant, and the client can afford it-- I try to concentrate on the architecture, work with an interior designer that I knew would enhance the building, and concentrate on the details of the building to help carry it out. And I met with them, so there was a real coordination between the interior designer and the architect. The same with the landscape architect.

Riess: Is that usual, to include the interior designer so early?

Steinberg: Well, we've done a lot of really very expensive homes, and I think in that range it's not unusual. But I think in smaller homes, people try to "do it themselves." The mistakes that a lot of people make have to do with their not understanding proportion, and they can get a piece of furniture that's too heavy in scale or

Steinberg: pictures on the walls that are not appropriate. And if somebody has really a nice art collection you design the house so that it can handle varieties of things.

Riess: I should think having it known that you have worked with Church would enhance your reputation.

Steinberg: Oh, it does. Over the years these houses that we have turned out together have been well respected.

Riess: Yet he hasn't wanted to work with you on the motels or churches that you do.

Steinberg: No, Tom has always stayed modest in size, and he's surprised me: over the years he's been able to maintain enthusiasm on each job that he does, so that it isn't canned. And he's 70 years old now. I think that a lot of people in architecture, after they've done it for 20 years they begin to tire and they slip, or they pass it off to others in the office, but Tom doesn't. And I think that he's probably found the greatest regard in doing homes. And doing universities has some other special appeal to him.

Riess: Has he ever talked to you about the major influences on him?

Steinberg: Once in talking to Tom I said, or I implied, that he was sort of the father of California landscape architecture. I said that to him and he said no, he was very much enamoured by somebody else that was in the area, but I don't know who that was.

I've worked with so many of the landscape architects in the area, and there are some excellent ones, like Bob Royston, and Baylis--he was a fine person and a real sensitive kind of person--and then there's a whole crop of young new ones there, like Tony Guzzardo and people in Royston's office. These are all fine landscape architects. But there is an intangible in Tommy. There is a special degree of elegance, and a special degree of outside space. And the quality of his detail. It may be that there is just a touch of formal understanding that goes with the formal training, the formal background, that comes through, that allows him to work informally but with a very classic elegance.

Riess: Sounds impossible for this generation to recapture.

Steinberg: Well, there are always exceptions. But he was an exception in his generation.

Riess: Did he speak of the influence of any architects? Like Wurster?

Steinberg: I don't know what the relationship was. I think that he probably would be hesitant to talk to me about his relationship with other architects. He would be very sensitive to people's feelings. He would not have spoken to me about other landscape architects. If I were to sit down with him and ask him about it, about what the relationship was, he probably would have unloaded, but I never-- we were always on our subject and the client's problems and our project. But it's fun where you go out on a job and you sit down and have some fried chicken in a bag, or a coke, out there, something like that--it was like going on a picnic, and you sit down and talk with a client.

Have you heard much of what I'm saying from many others?

Riess: Not of the relationship with the architect.

Steinberg: Well, I think what might not come out--oh, it might with other landscape architects--is his understanding of people is a very fine thing. Maybe other landscape architects wouldn't comment on his feeling of space, but his outside rooms were just that, rooms, spaces, that he blocked out and shaped, and that is a very, very important piece of landscape architecture.

Riess: In the 20 or more years that you have worked with Church, have you seen trends, changes, in his gardens?

Steinberg: Each job is different depending on clients. But I think that he has always fallen back on traditional forms. In architecture a traditional form would be a bay window, an eight-sided figure and you'd have two sides and a beveled edge. He used that form all the time in landscape features, where it would be an octagon shape or a beveled corner. If he's got a rolling surface behind it he can use that as a construction shape that is natural to construction. I think he was very sensitive of that stage. I think today he would fall back a little heavier on traditional.

In planting, well, he did a house 12 or 15 years ago, and then he did a house for me, my own house, five years ago, and he used birches very much the same way. I think he's probably designing more with an eye to maintenance because of the change in costs for people that do maintaining. He's adjusted to the changes in society and the financial position of people to maintain gardens. But I think the design approach would be similar.

Recently, because he was sick, I went ahead and worked out the siting of a building a certain way, and then he came back and took another look at it and did a rough over it and pushed it around

Steinberg: somewhat, and though I've gotten fairly skilful at doing it over the years, he still had enough of a change there for me to look at it and have a great deal of respect. I had it very close to what I thought was ideal, yet he came along and gave me a design crit on it that was a definite improvement. (And that doesn't mean that I wouldn't be able to do the reverse on something that he's doing.)

Riess: Let me be sure of what you mean when you say he falls back on the traditional.

Steinberg: I think shapes come and go in fashion. I don't think that Tommy has ever jumped on the fashion of the idea. There is an underlying principle that is embedded down deep, but developed in a very skilful way. Like van der Rohe's approach to design, it was very simple: you take a large sheet of people and put two lines on it, and then just move those two lines and study the four squares, or rectangles, in those lines. Pure proportion. He doesn't put a million things on that sheet of paper, he's just studying simple forms.

Tommy has an underlying something, that means just falling back on a very solid set of principles, using good quality, good design, good space, and those principles haven't changed over the years.

8) Answers to Questions Sent Goodwin B. Steinberg on May 21, 1976

Questions from Riess:

- 1) How many jobs have you done where Church was the landscape architect?
- 2) Were there any that were refused for reasons that would give insight into his practice, such as thoroughly abhorring the site, or feeling that for him the client relationship would not be right, or others?
- 3) Would you care to specify the collaborative work that you especially point to with pride, and which would underline some of the points you made in the interview, such as the sympathetic but separate treatment that Tommy gave the gardens?
- 4) Can you add anything anecdotal or otherwise that would further sharpen the picture of Tommy's work?

May 28, 1976

Ms. Suzanne Riess
University of California, Berkeley
Regional Oral History Office, Room 486
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Suzanne:

The following is an answer to your questions in reference to your letter of May 21, 1976. If this is short of complete, it is due to Mr. Steinberg's schedule which has been very hectic. He gave me the following summary as he ran out the door. He asks that you accept his sincere apology.

Jobs done with Tom Church:

Off hand, he estimated at least ten, but feels there are two or three more that he does not immediately recall. Some of the jobs are as follows: John Weingarten residence, George Long residence, John Mackay residence, Robert Klein residence, Dalton Martin residence, Os Crosby residence, Laurence Dawson residence, Goodwin Steinberg residence, Robert Sackman residence and Harvey Popell residence.

Refusals by Tom Church:

Yes, there was one instance where the building was designed and built and then the client interviewed Tom. Tom decided against doing the project. Perhaps the reason could have been either a feeling of lack of rapport or lack of direction by the client. In no case was there a situation where Tom really did not like the site. I believe Mr. Steinberg was very selective in this area.

Collaborative Work:

Laurence Dawson residence: Very informal. Ruth Dawson stressed a no maintenance garden. There was just a retaining wall and parking area with green shrubs adjusting the house to the hillside. The landscape was strictly a natural terrain and the building rested on glue laminated columns floating above the site. Tom used a combination of evergreen shrubs and meadow forming a carpet underneath the house and into the meadow beyond.

John Mackay residence: The relationship of the stable to the activity in the house was done so the stable could be seen from the living room window. Unusual but very interesting site planning.

Ms. Suzanne Riess
May 28, 1976
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Dalton Martin residence: The pool area worked very closely to the house and under a cantilever roof. Lovely outside rooms developed by planted trees.

Robert Klein residence: Had formal cut flower garden tucked away from the outdoor living areas. An unusual entry court had birch trees planted to create a forest quality mood as you walked to the front door.

Other features of Tommy's work were the variety of materials formal and informal in developing patios, pools, etc. Combinations of decks, patios and retaining walls varied depending on the desire of the client for formal or rustic gardens. Tommy has a fantastic feeling for shapes and spaces that are always three dimensional and not limited to surface decoration.

Mr. Steinberg said he really could not define any one home he liked better than another. Tom's work has a certain variety in his touch that particularly represents good design.

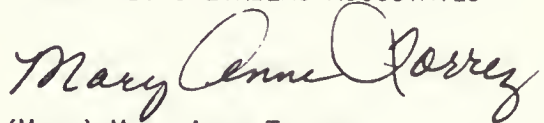
Tom did refer several clients to Mr. Steinberg over the years.

Mr. Steinberg considers Tom to be a very special person.

I hope you can decipher my interpretation of Mr. Steinberg's statements. I wanted to forward this rather than delay answers to your questions. Hope this is helpful.

Sincerely,

GOODWIN B. STEINBERG ASSOCIATES

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Anne Torrez". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

(Mrs.) Mary Anne Torrez
Secretary to Mr. Steinberg

June 1, 1976

Ms. Suzanne Rless
University of California, Berkeley
Regional Oral History Office, Room 486
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Suzanne:

Re: Tommy Church

Another house that we did together which turned out very nicely was Hugo Friend's house in Woodside.

Also, before we did the George Long house, we did the John Weingarten house and Robert Sackman house together. On these two houses, I laid out the actual building on the site and worked with the client prior to Tom's being involved. On the George Long house, Tom was hired before we were hired and did the site planning and conceptualization prior to any architectural involvement. I think this might clarify one of the questions you asked me.

Sincerely,


Goodwin B. Steinberg *ms*

mt

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Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Grace Hall

MR. CHURCH'S SECRETARY REPORTS ON THE UPDATING OF  
GARDENS ARE FOR PEOPLE

Interview Conducted by  
Suzanne B. Riess





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for People

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Grace Hall

March 3, 1978

Interviewed in the Thomas Church Office, 402 Jackson Street

Riess: How did you get your job with Mr. Church, Grace?

Hall: I was working for another firm in the city, and I had been with them for about 14 years, but there were some changes in the ownership and I began to feel that I should make a change. So I went to an agency and I explained that I would like to have something else, something rather different, and I said, "There's no hurry, because I want a very interesting job, and I want to work for someone who's very worthwhile."

After about four months there was a phone call, and she said, "How would you like to go to work for Thomas Church?" Well, I nearly dropped the telephone! I said, "You must be kidding!"

"No, I'm not, he needs a secretary."

I went to see him the next day, and I really hoped so much that I would get the job. And he didn't make any decision for a few days, so I did spend some rather nervous days, waiting and hoping.

Riess: What questions did he ask you?

Hall: Not really many, not many at all. But he took about a week to decide, and was I ever thankful when he did make up his mind!

Riess: You knew of Thomas Church?

Hall: Well, when we first came to live in San Francisco it was in the mid-1950 and rather soon after that his article in the Chronicle every Sunday came out, and that was where I first became acquainted with what he did. And from that time on I guess I was just a fan.

Riess: Who was in the office when you were hired?

- Hall: Walter Guthrie [ca. 1960-1973] and Jack Valette [ca. 1970-1971], and Rick Bennetts [ca. 1971-1972] was the third architect. Sam Ciofalo replaced Rick and was here from 1972-1973. I replaced Eurydice Uhrman, who was really Mr. Church's accountant--and still is--but she had combined the job of accountant and secretary for two years. And then she left to go back to college, and kept the job as accountant. This was in 1971.
- Riess: Of these men, Tommy was the designer.
- Hall: Oh, yes, absolutely, and Walter was his right-hand man, marvelous, with a tremendous knowledge of the engineering side of it, as well as the designing.
- Riess: And were new commissions coming in then?
- Hall: Continually. People were waiting years to get a Thomas Church garden. Some were repeat gardens. One lady I think he's done seven gardens for.
- Riess: Interesting that people could postpone getting the garden they wanted--that they were indeed wise enough to wait.
- Hall: There was one lady in Sacramento who bought quite a large property and he was away at the time she asked him to design it, so somebody else did it and she's regretted it ever since, and from time to time she calls, and he's helped her enormously with plans on paper and advice when she comes into the office. But she said it's the biggest regret of her life that she didn't wait until he came back and then wait until he had time to do the garden.
- Riess: Grace, when Tommy became sick, how did he decide what he was going to do with his time, when he was able to work; and at what point did he decide that a revised Gardens are for People was important for him to accomplish?
- Hall: First, and most important, he felt that he must finish the jobs that were incomplete when he first went into the hospital. There was one client, especially, with a very large job, and he was right in the middle of doing this when off he went for a long session at the hospital. But they said, "We'll wait, we don't mind how long, there is no pressure. We only hope that he can come back." And of course he did; he went back and finished it.

There were other small jobs, but that was the major large one. And when he could just about walk, with help, we went to visit several jobs--he wanted to see that they were being carried out the way he had first intended--so we went to several sites where the work had been finished.

Hall: Then when he couldn't really visit any more, he began to work on the book, and I think there the most important thing was when he received the copyright for Gardens are for People. Then he knew that he could revise it, which was so important. You see, Reinhold owned the copyright, and I believe the term was a 28-year period, and after that period I believe it would have been reassigned automatically to Tommy unless they wanted to extend their own copyright. Well, we wrote Reinhold and said, as it hadn't been revised and as they hadn't printed any more editions, would they be interested in reassigning to Mr. Church. And they did.

Riess: When was this?

Hall: Four or five months ago.

Riess: The idea of a book hadn't been in his mind earlier?

Hall: Well, there were two things we could have done: we could either have put out a complete new book on his pools--but that have been more difficult I think to sustain and it would have been more difficult to do owing to the state of his health. Now, the book that would have been the pools is going to be the final chapter of Gardens are for People.

Riess: And in what other ways is the book being revised?

Hall: There will be many additions, and a few deletions. Every chapter will have some work added to it.

Riess: More examples?

Hall: More examples, more written work, and more photography.

Riess: Will he keep the fine old archival pictures and the Humphry Repton quotes?

Hall: Oh yes, especially the quotations. It may be that some of the photography will have to be redone; this we will talk over with the publisher.

Riess: What will be deleted?

Hall: Just a few things.

Riess: Gardens he no longer wants to show?

Hall: No, just places where he thinks he has a better example.



- Hall: This project has been in the back of his mind, I think, for many years. What he called "the interim book," Your Private World, was to record some newer work and ideas and examples until he had time for the last book. People kept on saying, "When are you going to put out another book? How about another book?" He was so busy in his work, so these articles, which had been in the Chronicle, were assembled, and he added to them, and Your Private World evolved from this. You see, with Gardens are for People out of print, there was nothing for people to buy.
- Riess: People? Clients?
- Hall: Everybody--students, clients, people interested in gardens, they just wanted to buy something of Thomas Church's.
- Riess: As far as the swimming pools go, most of them had been done since the fifties? Well, I guess the Donnell was one of the first great ones.
- Hall: That was in 1950 or 1951, I believe. And at that time not so many people had either the means or the space for a pool.
- Riess: It's interesting, looking at the pools, that the shapes didn't continue to evolve from the Donnell pool abstraction, indeed the ones we are looking at [referring to draft of chapter on pools] are quite regular, and rectangular. I wonder if he sat and doodled pool shapes, or had designs in his mind that he would have wished to execute, but never could?
- Hall: That's interesting, and I'll ask him when I see him.
- Riess: As you work on the book, do you have any sense of which Tommy's really favorite works or proudest achievements were?
- Hall: Well, maybe some of the things that he's choosing for the final chapter of his book.
- The [Corydon] Wagner is in that, and the [Dewey] Donnell, and that magnificent [Louis] Ruskin one in Arizona, the [John] Gilbergh in Atherton is in it, the [John] Brookes is in it.
- Riess: [Looking at draft of swimming pool chapter, which opens with a photograph of Thomas Church sitting at the edge of a pool on the Corydon Wagner estate, Tacoma, Washington.] "Swimming in Your Garden."
- Hall: Yes, I asked him once what he was going to call the last chapter. He thought for a long time, and then he wrote out on his pad, "Swimming in Your Garden," and that is it.

Hall: Now this pool is also going in, the [Louis] Goldsmith's. It's in a very small space, Suzanne. It's in Palo Alto, and this is the photograph, these are the notes, and the before plan is going to be there, and the after plan, larger, will be here.

Riess: Isn't it unusual to show "before" in plan?

Hall: He did the plan showing how the garden was before and then another one completely of it afterward. Before, the house had the driveway going all the way around, through the back garden, to the garage here. Now he has this glorious garden and the pool in back.

Riess: I am interested in what his purpose was in doing the plan of the before.

Hall: Maybe he had this in mind, to show in a book. Because people are going to be terribly interested in this. You see how the outline of the house comes and how things are switched around.

Riess: Of course an aerial view is invaluable.

Hall: It is unusual. We don't have very many of the before plans like this. We have before photographs, and people are so interested in them.

Riess: Did he ever have aerial photography of a house or site done first?

Hall: Yes, there's a vineyard [in book] where he had an aerial view. And there is an aerial view of a place up in St. Helena which was done after the garden was built so we could see the new garden.

Riess: How has he done the text here?

Hall: These are mainly his notes. A few are mine, a few that I've gotten from different sources and changed around a little bit.

It's very hard to say when this will be finished, because it's so easy to polish and polish and polish. So we just do as much as he feels he can do each day, sometimes up to two hours. He has fantastic concentration.

Riess: Has there ever been a museum exhibit of his work alone in San Francisco?

Hall: I think there was one at the San Francisco Museum, and I know there was one at the Redwood Society up on Montgomery Street.

Now this is the [John] Gilbergh garden [1960]. His notes give it to you in a nutshell.

Riess: [Reading] "Many people want, on a small lot, what used to be on an estate...and it all got there without seeming too crowded. The pool is raised because the land was high. Two sides have no path around the pool, which saves space. It's a series of outdoor rooms. The pool is filled with tile they collected in Spain."

As I skim over it, his statements seems like lessons to the young landscape architect.

Hall: That I think is what is going to make the book so valuable. It isn't just a book for coffee-tables.

Riess: [Looking at the Pardee Erdman garden plan] This plan is almost modular, and certainly very linear.

Hall: There's no free form at all. It says, "This is a garden for a modern house in Santa Barbara which recalls the simplicity and scale of classic European gardens. The only immigrants are the Italian maidens...one-way tickets from Florence to their present abode."

Riess: His pools are all so different.

Hall: He did design for the site, and for the people, and if the people wanted something that he didn't feel would be right on the site, he would say, "I just don't think I can do that. Better get somebody else." This didn't happen often.

Riess: Who was the architect for the Erdman house?

Hall: Clayton Cook.

Riess: And the Wellington Henderson house is included here too.

[Looking at the plan of the Wagner pool] He designed this gazebo?

Hall: He designed, in the last years, all the architectural features in his gardens.

Riess: But whereas he knew his landscape contractors could carry out his garden plans, he must have had to work differently with the building contractors.

Hall: He supervised every single thing. He was right on the site. Even in the East and the South when he did designs he would go to supervise. He was away a lot of the time; he was continually going away. When I first came to work here he would make so many trips.

Riess: Costly for the clients.

Hall: But then it was worth it because it would probably        them enormous sums if they had a contractor who was doing the job improperly.

Now this is the Roberts, in Woodside. And this is the Budge, in Hillsborough, a long, narrow pool. And in this case the pool needs to be rephotographed.

Riess: I wonder if there will ever be a list published, or available, of all of Tommy's gardens.

Hall: Suzanne, I began it, and I'm about two-thirds of the way through it. I am going all through the files according to district. That's how he wanted it done. It needs a lot more time to work on it, and now I spend most of my time on the book.

Riess: Of course that doesn't at all mean that the gardens will be available to view.

Hall: Most are private gardens, and viewing them will depend on each individual owner.

Riess: How much has this office been a sort of headquarters for visiting landscape architects from all over?

Hall: People would come in from all over, sometimes complete strangers, and he always was busy, but always delightful to everybody.

Once he had a request, and this was by telephone, and they wanted him somewhere in Iran. This must have been about 1973. I went into his office and I said, "There's someone from Iran on the telephone and they want to know if you'll be available to go and design their garden. There are seven acres."

He thought for a long time. He asked, "Are they waiting?" I said yes, but they didn't mind. Then he said, "I just can't do it, I haven't got the time. It would be interesting, but I haven't got the time, I've got too much backlog." So he had to turn that down, but he did think for a long time before. I know he certainly was interested.

Riess: Would you have told me if it was the Shah of Iran? [Laughter]

Hall: No, it wasn't the Shah. But even so, I think the Shah would have been turned down.

Riess: What is your recollection of his opinion of other landscape architects' work?



Hall: Whenever people asked for a recommendation, if he couldn't do a job, he would say, "You know, I've been so busy I haven't really had time to go around and look at other people's work." Now, I've heard him say this several times when people would ask, "Well, if you haven't got time, who should I go to?"

Riess: Was he just being diplomatic?

Hall: I really don't think he did have the time. He always had too much work, and when you have so much going yourself there really isn't much time to go around and criticize other people's work.

Riess: For many, seeing others' work would be a source of ideas.

Hall: Well, his main source was his study of the classical designs, and then since then all of the designs came out of his own head.

Riess: But there are breakthrough gardens, landmark gardens, like the Donnell.

Hall: Another breakthrough was the Sullivan garden, a long narrow garden, where looking at this particular garden from the end you didn't just see a long narrow garden, you saw a very interesting shape towards the end of the garden which changed the whole view, somehow, and made you wonder what was beyond that shape.

Riess: And the sources for that?

Hall: The source was from his own mind.

Riess: Has he elaborated on his notes on the Donnell garden, for the revised book?

Hall: I just started on that with him.

Riess: And on the Sullivan garden?

Hall: No, but I think he will.

Riess: Tommy and Betsy went to Europe often. What did they visit?

Hall: The chateaux, and the old gardens, the old parks.

Riess: And do a lot of photographing and sketching?

Hall: Very few sketches, but a lot of photographs.

Riess: He worked better from photographs, if he were referring back to something?

Hall: I suppose so. I never asked him. And you know he was always a very quiet man, and so busy, that one hesitated to come in with a whole load of things that one would like to ask. But he did work from photographs a lot and he would scotch-tape as many as six or seven snapshots of the site together so he would get the whole panoramic view.

And his photography files are very methodical. It is an important part of his work. Let me show you. [Grace Hall and interviewer look at photography files organized by details--steps, walls, curbs, etc.-- and files organized by clients; those comprise one groups of files. There are also files of plans, correspondence, etc., organized by clients. Grace Hall refers several times in the interview to the Scrapbook, an enormous compendium of pasted cutout articles on the work of Mr. Church that has been kept up in the office over the years.]

To sum up Thomas Church, in a few words, if that is possible: He is a great man and the world has been truly fortunate to have benefited from the lasting beauty of his designs, and the importance of his ideas which have contributed so greatly to the profession of landscape architecture.

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Thomas D. Church Oral History Project

Lawrence Halprin

A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT'S APPRECIATION OF CHURCH'S PLACE
IN ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN HISTORY

Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

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Lawrence Halprin

October 7, 1977

Interviewed in his office, The Roundhouse, Sansome Street,
San Francisco

1) Histories and Influences

Halprin: I was very interested in the Zionist movement and after prep school I went over to Israel and lived on a kibbutz for a couple of years. I had intended to be a painter, and after getting through the kibbutz--and I wanted desperately to live on a kibbutz--I thought that the most relevant thing to do was not to be a painter but somehow to get into something which had some meaning for the development of the country, which didn't at the time seem to be painting.

With that as an idea I went to Cornell to study agriculture in a social context. There wasn't, at least I didn't know about it, an ecology movement in those days, but I was interested in agriculture and the landscape as kind of an ecological synergy, if you want to use that word, and I trained there.

I was going to go back to Israel, get on the kibbutz--which I'm still sort of an ex-officio member of--when the war intervened, and I didn't go back. I had just gotten married, so I didn't go right into the war. I got involved in one thing and another and I finally ended up at Harvard, the graduate school of design.

Now, I don't know how much you want to know about me, because I don't want to bore this tape with my background.

Riess: More about you. Seems like going to Harvard was joining the establishment, for one who was looking for more relevance.

Halprin: That's an odd interpretation. It was anything but the establishment. In those days the Bauhaus was at Harvard, Gropius was teaching there, 1941. And Breuer. Moholy Nagy used to come. Christopher Tunnard was teaching landscape architecture.

Riess: Well then it's not an odd interpretation, just unenlightened.

Halprin: See, Harvard became an establishment afterwards, but at that time it was in a tremendous ferment. It was a couple of years after Garrett Eckbo was there, and Dan Kiley. Philip Johnson, I.M. Pei and Paul Rudolph were there. What happened actually was that I had been at Wisconsin as a teaching assistant and I went over to Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin East [Spring Green, Wisconsin] one day, with my wife, just to see it.

I didn't know anything about architecture, and landscape architecture. It was like a bolt of thunder. I walked in one door and walked out the other and decided I must find out more about architecture as a profession. I went to the library and found probably amongst the significant books in landscape architecture just by chance one by Christopher Tunnard. Do you know that book? It's called Gardens in the Modern Landscape. It's the only important book on the subject that I know of really. And the others are all pap.

Riess: Up to that time? Or still.

Halprin: Still. Or, they don't say any more than Chris said, only they say it in more pages, or some damn fool thing.

Riess: A book of theory?

Halprin: He was dealing with the whole social context of landscape architecture, that was the whole theme, and he was trying to deal with it in a holistic way, which is to say it is not only an art form but it is also a social issue and has to do with transportation and has to do with how to rebuild cities and how to deal with what the landscape of the world ought to be and how people can live in it. And that's why I bristled a little bit when you said I had joined the establishment, because nothing could have been further from the truth. Chris's was at that time, and for some time afterwards, the only avant garde thinking in landscape architecture in the world.

Riess: Well, I was thinking of the thirties as the Bauhaus era. But that was my ignorance.

Halprin: Well, I don't think you're the only one. I think if I mentioned this to the landscape department over there nobody would know his name, that is Tunnard's.

Riess: When Tunnard talks of "Gardens in the Modern Landscape," he is talking about a very big definition of all of those words.

Halprin: Sure, the word garden he uses in the English sense, which is what Capability Brown did, and Repton did, and even Olmsted did, and what I do. It has not got to do with little piddly gardens. It has to do with how you live in the world as a garden, or the Garden of Eden.

What happened was that after reading this book I thought, "Jesus Christ, this is exactly where I want to be," because of the social interests I had from the kibbutz, and my interest in art and so forth. "This is exactly what I want to do," and it is weird I had never heard of it before. So I looked up in the catalog and I saw "Landscape Architecture"--I'm very sympathetic with a lot of young people now, and if they wonder why I'm so sympathetic and help so much young people who are going from one profession into the other, it's because I went through the same thing [at Wisconsin].

I'm encapsulating this, of course. I saw the only thing that said "Landscape Architecture was in Horticulture. I went in and I said, "I want to take a course."

They said, "It's already started."

I said, "I'd like to take it anyway."

"Well, why should we let you in?"

I brought them a couple of paintings and then they said, "Oh, okay, come in." The paintings really did it for them, which is quite appropriate.

And after three weeks Professor Aust said, "Oh, it's like throwing a duck into water. You better go to a real school." And they called up Harvard on the phone and arranged for me to have a scholarship, and four weeks afterwards I was there, taking from Chris Tunnard who was teaching.

You say the Bauhaus was in the thirties. The thirties, even more the late twenties, was the Bauhaus in Germany. But they got disrupted by the Nazis. And Gropius went to England. He only stayed there for a short while. He wasn't very happy in England.

Joseph Hudnut, the dean of architecture who was brought in to Harvard to reform the department and make it something instead of a rich man's plaything, went out and got hold of all the people from the Bauhaus he could bring over, including Gropius and Breuer and others. Moholy-Nagy had started a new Bauhaus in Illinois, but he used to come and lecture a lot. And they brought in Chris Tunnard,

Halprin: who as I said was the only thinker at the time in landscape architecture. The whole school was in ferment; it was really exciting, really exciting; I can't imagine anything better.

See, people misunderstood the Bauhaus also. They think it has to do with form and how you design particular forms. It had nothing to do with that at all.

Riess: It does for architects, doesn't it?

Halprin: No. Oh, it has to do for those architects who don't penetrate behind the surface of things.

But the Bauhaus had two ideas, and one of them was that all art and life are related to each other, and what you need to do is take young people and educate them in art and life on an experimental level, and don't worry about which discipline is which. And so they had Paul Klee and [Lionel] Feininger and Anni Albers, the tapestry woman, and dancers, and singers, and [Kurt] Schwitters, and [Oskar] Schlemmer, from the theater, and [László] Moholy-Nagy, all teaching there, and they were all teaching together. And the people that came out of that (and some of them were architects) knew everything about art that there was, film, graphics, everything. It was the most incredible school in the world, and it had nothing to do with the form of things.

And the second thing is that they tried to link all of that into an industrial society, so they put a lot of these people in craft situations as apprentices in industry around the school.

And so then also they produced things for industry. They said, "We are available to design objects for industry in a modern way on a mass-production level," and that's how a great deal of the industrial design started in this country and all over the world.

Riess: How does Alvar Aalto fit into that? He doesn't, does he?

Halprin: No, he was a unique guy. Tommy was very influenced by Aalto. (Tommy wasn't at all influenced by the Bauhaus. I don't think he knew very much about it. I'm just explaining how I happened to get there.)

Tommy and Bill Wurster had spent quite a considerable amount of time with Aalto, who was a very brilliant, craftsmanlike architect, much looser than most of the architects were around the U.S. at the time. Many of the problems that he was facing in the natural landscape were very related to the Bay Area rather than the East Coast, and so Bay Area architects, who had very little as

Halprin: fundament for their way of thinking, because most of the theories were developed more in relationship to eastern conditions, found Aalto a very good paradigm, or model, for what they would like to do.

Riess: They wanted a model who was a theoretician, not a Maybeck, or Julia Morgan.

Halprin: No, it wasn't that, it was that they looked to someone wholly modern who echoed in a more positively modern way what they saw as some of their own issues. Because Maybeck and Julia Morgan after all formed a transition between 19th century romanticism and modern times. The Bay Area moderns were trying to strike out further.

I think Aalto seemed to them a much more relevant person for their time, just as the Bauhaus seemed to me more relevant than anything else at the time that was going on.

Riess: It's interesting that within a short time, 10 years or so, the Bay Region had acquired a style that had people coming out here to find out what they knew here. Architects here seemed to need very little from the east and Europe, and even from Aalto.

Halprin: Well, as I say, you never know from what you learn. First of all you must learn to feel not lonely when you're innovating. The fact that he was doing something like what they were doing made them feel less lonely, more secure. Also Tommy then got involved with the furniture that Aalto produced.

Well, I'm not sure at this point what the question was, but I know that both Bill and Tommy coming to Europe, seeing Aalto working there, also perceiving some things that were not being attacked here, like problems of social housing and so forth--which was more interesting to Bill than Tommy, actually, but Tommy worked on them too--which Aalto was working on, and the Finns were working on, this brought them a leap forward from Maybeck and Julia Morgan who still were working, on the whole, in a context which was non-socially relevant and had nothing to do much with social housing or the New Deal or any of the problems that were really fermenting at that time. And the same thing applied to Vernon deMars, who was Bill Wurster's protege--and knew Tommy and Bill very closely during that period.

Riess: [Laughing] So many people say that "So-and-so knew Tommy very closely." I'm just getting sort of jaded about that.

Halprin: I'm sure everybody claims they knew Tommy.

Riess: Claim they knew him but then feel that they didn't "really" know him personally. That he was outgoing and charming, but for some inaccessible. I sense this from men who worked with him, and maybe it was the times, or the distance men often keep.

Halprin: No, I don't think it was the times. I think Tommy was what they perceived him to be. I felt very close to Tommy, but I never talked at great length about personal issues, if that's what they mean. He wasn't that kind of a person. I think there were only perhaps a few people who knew Tommy intimately. Bob Howard maybe, because he was down at the farm there a lot. And the Gregorys. And Bill, to an extent, but even there not so much. I think the confusion is that Tommy's friends were social people whom he went to dinner with and played around with a little bit. And the professional who wanted to be warm and friendly and close--well, Tommy didn't particularly want to be.

Riess: What was Harvard like when Eckbo, Kiley and Rose were there?

Halprin: It was an important time. They came to Harvard, which was a very rigid, staid school teaching authentic ways of designing which had grown down from the Olmsted office, but without any attention to social context or knowledge about the new way of looking at the world in terms of art or anything else. They came there and did make a tremendous shift in the school in terms of what they were interested in. It started in architecture later, when Gropius came. Tunnard wasn't there at the time (when Kiley, Eckbo, Rose were). I think that was an important time for them, the three of them, but not so much an important time for the school.

2) Bay Region Styles: The Forties

Riess: Well, then Eckbo came back, and his firm, and Church's, were the two major Bay Area firms in the forties. I have a list I made from a San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Catalog on the Bay Region Style, 1949, and can see that the firms seemed to divide the architects of the area between them. I've grouped them, and I wonder what you think it all signifies.*

*See Rockrise interview, p. 363.

Halprin: [Looking at names] Well, this is part of the time when I was in Tommy's office, so I think I would know some of the answers to that. Part of it is stylistic and these guys (Eckbo, etc.) are much more formalistic than these on the whole.

The other thing is that you always have to take in the question of personality, too. Working with somebody is like marriage, without the fun of sex. It's hard to explain; when you really get to working with somebody on a creative level, it's a very incredible relationship. That's why when you talk about people working with each other, if they really work with each other a lot it's a very close relationship--I'm dead serious about that--on a creative level, and it's very profound. And in many ways it's more important than a personal relationship. What you're doing is you're spilling out your guts with each other, and it's digging into what the real essence and meaning of your life is about, which is not just chitter-chatter about playing cards with each other.

So, a lot of it is personal. Does Tommy, or do I, or so-and-so, get along with each other, or don't we? You've got to be a little careful about getting too profound about it (the distinct lists of architects who worked with either Church or Eckbo) for that reason. That's number one. It's also not black and white, because [Clarence] Mayhew and we, when I was in Tommy's office, used to work together. And we worked also with Worley [Wong] and with Anshen and Allen. It's not a sharp line.

But it is fair enough. I think some of it is age, and a lot of it is stylistic approach. These guys, the ones you list as working with Eckbo, except for Worley, were trying to work much more with the idea of form in a modern sense. A lot of the people linked to Tommy were more easy-going about just trying to design nice houses without worrying too much about form.

Riess: Okay, and form in a modern sense is that perverted understanding of the Bauhaus.

Halprin: Umm hmm, and it's very perverted. So I think that is part of the reason for the difference, and part of it is personal. And also, I think if you look through this list there is another interesting thing, and it may be more important. Most of these people [Eckbo side] perceive gardens as decorations, and the Church people did not. These architects, particularly Bill Wurster and Joe Esherick and Gardner, perceived them much more as--Gardner Dailey after all started out as a landscape architect--perceived it much more as a real essential marriage of two spaces, open and closed, indoor and outdoor, and treasured that relationship, and were really trying to explore it.

Halprin: Most of the other guys gave it complete lip service, but weren't really interested in it. And so they worked with Eckbo, Royston and Williams who have a much more decorative approach, or did, than Tommy.

Riess: I guess I get the idea of what decorative means.

Halprin: I mean fussy, and formalistic, and paying a great deal of attention to shapes, little angles, and very derivative from painting rather than from the essence of a landscape architecture. And that ties in with a lot of what these guys were interested in in terms of architecture.

3) TDC: Personal Involvement and Remarkable Evenness

Riess: And as to the personality and personal thing, you've just described a creative process, "spilling the guts," that sounds a good deal more deep and profound than what I would have pictured Tommy's creative process to be.

Halprin: Well, I really was expressing my own point of view. On the other hand, you have to be a little careful about Tommy, because he was not an expressive person. I doubt he would ever say these things, but they were part of his life even though he did not articulate them. The same about a close personal relation, professional relationship, with those people whom he really liked and got along with in working.

He also had that same thing with clients that I just expressed to you. He became very involved with his clients and their lives on a--I don't know what level, but he really liked them and perceived them as people whom he wanted to have the same relationship with that I have expressed about professionals, and I think that's why he got along so well with clients. He was very non-judgmental about clients and he really appreciated the best in everybody rather than seeing the worst in them. I never really saw him dislike anybody. And that was quite different than me, so I appreciated it; I tend to be somewhat judgmental and I'm very fussy about clients, and if I don't like them I don't want to work for them, and so forth.

But Tommy really never was that way. He really liked to work with people. There didn't seem to be any difference between them in how he related to them. That's part of the reason he was so successful in dealing with them. And it wasn't put on at all.

Halprin: Because I think one of the greatest art forms that he had was how he brought the best out of people, and did the best with them. In my way of thinking, that's the most artistic thing he ever did.

Riess: Then it's true that when he would come on to a job, or see a site, he wouldn't have his own design response so much as he would really want to talk to the clients and find out what they wanted.

Halprin: Yes, in a very real sense. And he also would want to look and see what the site wanted. Now, he was very good at that, extremely good, at both asking the site what it wanted, and asking the people what they wanted.

Riess: His ability to get along with the client in perpetuity is really also remarkable isn't it?

Halprin: Yes, people were very fond of him. But I've seen a lot of con artists who tried to get along with clients and be smooth and so on. It was just put on, they knew that that was a good way to work. But that was not true of Tommy, he was deeply that way. That's why it remains.

Riess: The combination of people, site and client, and architect, wouldn't be uniformly propitious each time, consequently the results couldn't be.

Halprin: No, of course not. But most of the time it seemed to me there was a kind of evenness about him that also was quite admirable. Many, many architects, important ones, are quite uneven because the chemistry isn't right, and they inject a tremendous amount of themselves into situations. And therefore, some things come out brilliantly and some things come out extremely poorly, and some in the middle. That isn't true about Tommy.

Most of his stuff came out quite well. Some extremely well. He was much more even in what he did than most of the important architects and so forth that I know. He was much more even in that than I am. You know, some of my work is extremely good, and some is not so good, depending on how it works.

4) First Impressions and Later Associations

Riess: Had you heard of Tommy's work when you were at Harvard?

Halprin: No, except for one time. I remember there was an exhibit of his work [at Harvard] I think the last year I was there. I remember it very clearly. It was very different than the things that we had been seeing before. It was all curlicues and very baroque--sort of strange, really. It was not a very good exhibit. It was very highly criticized, and I didn't like it very much, and it didn't seem terribly serious. It only had to do with private gardens, and at the time at Harvard we were all interested in--first of all the war was going on, and we didn't know why we should look at gardens, which did seem a little weird.

I recall--I'm just free associating now because I haven't thought about it--I recall also that it had nothing to do with what seemed at the time to have some importance as a striking point of architecture and landscape architecture. Bear in mind also that I keep on talking about architecture and landscape architecture, but I don't make that much differentiation between them. And also, at the time I wasn't sure which I was going to be. So, that's why I combine the two words at this point.

Riess: Okay, but generally a negative first impression.

Halprin: Oh, yes, I didn't like it, I thought it was foolish, and frivolous. And I had not heard about Tommy, nor had anybody else I think at the school. He had not got a national reputation.

The way I got to know him is that Bill Wurster came to Harvard the last year I was there, with Catherine Wurster, and we became close friends, we used to go on bicycle trips together and so forth. My wife loved Catherine personally, as did I. When I went to the Navy, they gave me their apartment here to stay in for the few days that I was waiting for my ship, and Annie and I stayed there. It was up on Telegraph Hill, and she waved good-bye to my ship from there.

When I got out of the Navy, finally, Bill Wurster had left word in his office that when I came through San Francisco (he knew I was going to come through) that they should intercept me and ask me to work for them. So I went in and they said, "The only thing Bill said was that Tommy Church wants you to work for him. And you should go down there first." This was the message from Bill Wurster who was in the office above.

Halprin: I went down, and talked to Tommy. I went upstairs and I talked to Wurster's group. And I went away for three days, pounding the pavement, trying to figure out whether I should be an architect or a landscape architect. Because I knew that that was the turning point, "which."

Riess: Was that some particular insight of Bill Wurster's. Do you think he made that decision for you in a way?

Halprin: I think he thought I would make a more important contribution in landscape architecture. But, if I wanted to work and be an architect in his office he'd love to have me. I think so. I forgot to ask him.

Riess: Was that because of conversations with Catherine, and it was apparent to him that you were more--

Halprin: I think so, into landscape architecture, into planning and so forth, yes, I think so.

And he'd mentioned a little bit to me about Tommy when he was at Harvard--we talked a little bit about Tommy and his working relationship with Tommy. He wasn't very articulate about it either. [Laughter]

I decided finally, yes; I thought I had emphasized much more the landscape in my point of view and I should hang in there with it. So, I went and worked with Tommy.

Riess: What was that interview like?

Halprin: Oh, he said, "Bill said that you should work for me. I understand you're very good, and I'd like to have you come. I'm not going to argue with you about salary, so I'm going to give you \$75 a week. Can you start tomorrow?" I said, "Sure."

Riess: No talk about the future or anything like that?

Halprin: No.

Riess: You didn't care.

Halprin: Why would I care? [Laughter] No, no, no. We didn't talk very much. That's all I can remember about it. I remember him saying, "I'm not going to argue about it." This I remember very distinctly because I didn't know what people's salaries were. So he said, "I'm going to give a little bit more than what I should. \$75 a week."

Riess: And who was in the office?

Halprin: June Meehan was the only one in the office, June Meehan and I. She, Tommy and I were the only ones in the office for the first two years I was there.

Riess: He was still recovering from not much going on during the war?

Halprin: I guess so. We seemed to have enough to work at. The only reason that Rockrise got into the office was that Ed Stone commissioned us to work on this Panama Hotel, and Tommy realized that it was a relationship between architecture at a large scale and landscape at a large scale, much more structural than anything we had been working on, and that we had to put out a set of working drawings, documents, that were much more refined and "professional" than anything that we had done up to then, and that the best way to do that would be to bring some architect from Ed Stone's office into our office who would be able to make that linkage. Rockrise was working for Ed Stone at the time, and he [Church] asked him to come.

Riess: He had had Royston and Baylis; I guess he just couldn't afford to keep them on, or they were drafted.

Halprin: Well, Royston went to the Navy. And Doug--

Riess: Maggie Baylis says that he was actually sent off on his own by Tommy. I've heard that from Rockrise too, always stated positively, that, "One of the greatest things that Tommy did was to encourage me to go out on my own." Funny, nobody particularly talks about the other possibility which might be to invite one to join in a partnership.

Halprin: Yes, he talked to me a little bit about that. And that was a possibility and we mutually agreed it wasn't a good idea. I don't know how we mutually agreed. It sounds too formalized in what I'm saying. And I'm very glad I didn't join him as a partner, both for me and for him. I think it would have been inhibiting for me, and inhibiting for him.

Riess: But it was talked about, it wasn't just the absence of talk that decided it?

Halprin: No, no. So in a sense, that's the same with me, and that is that having done that, he encouraged me to go and do well. Except that I decided, in that case, I decided that I wanted to leave. I have an inscription which I treasure from him in a book he gave me as I left the office. It was a book by Siren on the gardens of China. "To Larry Halprin, that heel, who loved me and left me." [Laughs] Very cute.

Riess: And did he send you off with some jobs?

Halprin: No, no.

Riess: You didn't need that, or--

Halprin: I don't know. I had one job as I left which happened to be for my father-in-law, a kind of a model of how many young people get started. And that was all.

I just decided to go off. That's all. I felt I had finished my apprenticeship, that I wanted to strike out of my own, that there were a lot of things that I wanted to do that Tommy wasn't interested in, that on an aesthetic level there were a lot of explorations I wanted to do on my own that had nothing to do with his style. And the world was a big place and I wanted to just get out and do it.

I really never had intended to stay with him for a very long time. But I did treasure the apprenticeship, and the association. I thought it was terrific. I learned a great deal from him--on a craft level.

Riess: And that's how he would have thought of the people there, as apprentices?

Halprin: Sure.

Riess: And was he a good teacher?

Halprin: Only in the sense that he was a model. He never told you anything very much, but working on projects with him you observed it. And towards the end he gave me a lot of freedom which he just then patted a little sideways, "do this, do that." But after all that's what I used to do in my office, too, so that's fine.

Riess: And do you think he learned very much from his apprentices? Since they all came from different periods and places, and had a lot to offer.

Halprin: What do you mean by learn?

Riess: Well, took and used in developing his own further style.

Halprin: I think that his interests remained the same all the way through, his objectives remained the same. I think that each person that was there, as I perceive it in all events, influenced strongly the aesthetic of the moment, on an aesthetic level. Because the aesthetics shifted a great deal.

5) "His Own Inherent Style"

Halprin: And then finally when I left--you asked, yourself, why did Tommy stop having creative people come in, which I'll be glad to talk about--after that he shifted back to his own inherent style, which was almost a shift back to 10, 15 years before.

Riess: Okay. What is his own inherent style?

Halprin: I think it's got two things going in it: First, it's functional. Have you ever read that magazine article that we did together in House Beautiful? "The Backyard, America's Most Mis-used Natural Resource." This was a sketch I did. [Chuckles] It was a preamble to the book [Gardens are for People]. And it set forward most of the principles that were being put forth at the time, that is, that the small garden was an important resource for people, that one of the things you need to do is to solve some of the functional needs. After all, a lot of people were coming back from the war; young families needed to have play areas; and the suburbs were blossoming. It was the time of the great explosion in the suburbs.

Riess: It's interesting that Tommy had a message that he wanted to get across.

Halprin: Yes. He did have a message. House Beautiful commissioned him, so we went down to his farm, spent two weeks down there, and put together this issue.

Riess: I see.

Halprin: He didn't do a lot of writing. But he did do a fine book called Gardens are for People.

Riess: But it is a message that he wanted to--

Halprin: That's right, it is a message that he does want to get across, which is how people can enlarge their lives through their gardens. And that there are some basic principles that are simple, and they have not too much to do with aesthetics. They're simple, down to earth, Sunset-type points of view. And that's where his great strength lies in that he is addressing himself, I think, to very simple basic ideas and doing it beautifully.

Riess: Right. And I realize that what we were addressing ourselves to was your statement that after you left he went back to his style of the earlier days which was functional in its motivation, and what's the other?

The Backyard

740a

House Beautiful
January 1949
pp. 38-55

— America's
most mis-used
natural
resource



The land on which you built your house represents 10 to 30 per cent of your

total investment. Are you using it to enlarge your living space, better your living, and provide winter-summer beauty? Most people are not. But they *could*. And so can you.

The next 28 pages show you how to utilize one of your greatest undeveloped assets

Halprin: And more formalized design.

Riess: Axial?

Halprin: Yes, more axial, symmetrical, classical, and rich. Tommy paid lots of attention to patterning in gardens--paving patterns, wall patterns, overall patterns. Less to volume, very little to mass. His expressive quality was largely light, springing out from hills, on decks--cantilevers, not massive. My impression, anyway.

Riess: You say "rich," meaning textures, materials?

Halprin: No, rich people.

Riess: Yes. [Laughter] Yes, by that time, in a way it was all gravy, it seems to me. He was just automatically called upon. That's why I think of it being somewhat damaging to one's creative output, to just automatically be asked. He could do no wrong.

Halprin: Now I'm expressing a personal point of view. I think it did him in. I think he made no forward movement after 1948 or '49, or '50, and stopped innovating anything after that. But that's a personal point of view. And you know, in a funny way I think that's what he wanted. I think he had said what he wanted to say; he was not a deeply theoretical person at all; he was very pragmatic, and very down to earth, and basic, and that's where his strength lay.

Riess: Well, and the main emphasis in the fifties was in the public sector.

Halprin: That's right, in the public sector. It started in the fifties and went on, and he wasn't much interested in that, and didn't want to get involved in it very much.

During these past 20 years, almost 30 years, I don't think he has shifted his interests much. I think it was all from before that. He worked for rich people whom he loved--he liked rich people. He talked their language, they talked his language, they got along well. There was no social content, there was no abrasiveness, and that's what he really liked.

Riess: The master planning, do you think that that was a special aspect?

Halprin: You mean to the various universities? I think there too he was dealing with elite people on the board of directors, who got along well with him. And I don't think he added very much. I don't think it was a major contribution of his at all which is a shame because he had the potential of being--if he wanted to, and I just think he didn't want to--of being a really significant landscape architecture in the history of the world.

Halprin: I don't know where he'll fit. I think he will fit in a very important way in having been one of the people who helped shift into the modern movement--one of them, because he isn't the only one by a long shot. And that he has done some beautiful gardens, and simple gardens, without a lot of fuss and feathers, and really dealt with basic landscape issues on a craft level, that really made a big impact in the landscape. Period.

6) Some Fine Gardens

Riess: What are the Thomas Church gardens to be remembered?

Halprin: Oh, I don't know. I'd have to look through the book again.

Riess: Pam-Anela Messenger [in her M.A. thesis] talks about the Martin garden at Aptos, and the Donnell garden and says that those are the things that he's known for and yet that they're really not typical. And from what I gather from Rockrise, I would say that the Donnell is a lot of your work.

Halprin: Yes, it was. I'm always nervous about people taking credit because the world is full of people who've come through my office and said, "Oh, Larry didn't do this, I did it."

I think it's fair enough to say that my hand on that thing was very strong, on both a conceptual level, and I supervised it, I had the idea of the island in the pool--and so on. Yes, I was the designer of it, but I don't think I would have, at that time in my life, I probably would never have been able to get it done on my own, and I was in Tommy's office after all. I don't want to detract from--it's his project. I'm not being equivocal. He made it possible and lent his great knowledge to making it.

I think it's probably true that the Donnell garden is one of the important gardens that has ever been designed, and I'm very glad I had a hand in designing it.

Riess: But if it's being referred to as Tommy's most important garden by garden critics--

Halprin: It was published under our joint names. That's fine.

Riess: --then could you point to others that exemplify what his contributions to modern landscape architecture were?

Halprin: This one I think is a very good garden, the Martin, and Tommy did that one by himself. [p. 130, 131, Gardens] I was sitting there and watching him, so I know damn well that nobody helped him on that one. I drew it but I didn't have anything to do with that garden [Martin], and it's a very good garden. Excellent.

This was a very important exhibit. [Landscape Design, SFMA, 1948] The catalog was more important than the exhibit, I suppose. There's the Donnell.

Riess: The two interlocking amoeba shaped things, that's your--

Halprin: Yes.

Riess: The whole thing?

Halprin: Again I want to say the garden came out of Tommy's office. I didn't detail the architecture, George did that, but I did the siting as part of the overall composition. I spent a lot of time up there supervising because a good deal of the issue was to move these rocks around in a good way. And the client and I--I used to go up there quite often--I was living in Marin anyway and I used to go up there day after day and move the rocks around with him. That was fun, and very nice, and was something that I was always interested in anyway, how rocks and nature can kind of mesh. So this was a good experiment in that sense.

Riess: Was that towards the end of your time in the office?

Halprin: It was almost at the end.

Riess: Because it must have seemed apparent to everybody then that you were--

Halprin: That I was ready. Yes, sure.

I think another thing that happened was towards the end Tommy was away a lot. I can't remember exactly, I think they were in Europe for six weeks or something, and he was away enough so that going out and supervising everything and doing one thing and another it became apparent to me that maybe it would be just as well if I struck off on my own. But it was very amiable. I'm more than very fond of Tommy.

Somebody on a professional level would have to go through his work carefully--other than the ones who have appointed themselves--somebody who knows about garden design, and decide which is the most important.

Riess: Well, who do you think is the dean of the thinkers? You said that there's nobody since Tunnard who has a real view of the field.

Halprin: No, I shouldn't say it that way. I think Garrett has made an important philosophical contribution, and has done some articles. I suppose I consider that some of the books that I've done and so forth have contributed something in that regard. Do you know of the RSVP Cycles, for example?

Riess: I've just read Cities.

Halprin: Well, that's the first book I wrote. I've written four since then.

Riess: [Laughs] I know, I pass them all in the card catalog, but I always go for Cities.

Halprin: Well, Cities is a simple, straightforward book. The RSVP Cycles is a much more philosophical book. You might read that sometime. It has much more to say than Cities.

This [p. 192, Gardens are for People] was a very important garden that he did for the World's Fair which had a tremendous influence on a lot of people. I think a lot of that then influenced Royston and some of the people who came out of the office at that time.

And the Bradley garden is a very good garden. Now, I must say I don't know who was in his office at the time of the Bradley garden. But those forms were very important as an influence.

Then I think even here [p. 221]*what started to happen is things like this which are less than mediocre, and this stuff which is nonsense.

That's a very good garden [p. 225].

Riess: A number of your drawings are in this book.

Halprin: [Chuckles] That's my wife [p. 232]. Yes, a lot of these [drawings] are mine. I would have to go through it, and think about it.

This was very nice [p. 159]. I worked with him on that. But a lot of that was his hand, too. This whole deck. And one of his major contributions, I think, was the idea of decks.

Riess: The Everett Griffin house in Santa Cruz.

*This and following page numbers refer to Gardens are for People.

Halprin: This [p. 155] is a very nice small garden--one of the best that was ever done, had an influence, a little bit, I'm afraid, on mine.

This [p. 150] was an elegant city garden.

Riess: Were those curves labored over, or did they arrive with the conception?

Halprin: Well, no, what Tommy used to do would be to say, "Okay, you have a space like this." The house is, say, like this. And I want to put a something here, and then we'll tie it together like that. [Draws sweeping one-and-a-half S curve] Okay, there's no sense of laboring over that on a piece of paper. You might just as well go out and do it. So, he'd go out and--or we would. Sometimes you can either run a thing like that with a stick or you can run a hose out there, curve on the side, on a small scale project which is private. You can't do that on a big project or where public funds are used because it has to be contracted and everything bid. But that's how these were done, they were just what I said. And you spring these header boards into place by driving stakes along the redwood, let the redwood find its own form.

Riess: Then even your contractor ends up being the one who's doing a bit of that designing. For instance, if the ground were unworkable underneath or something like that, if there were a big rock there, the contractor maybe would--

Halprin: Bring it to somebody's attention, yes.

Riess: Or swing the header board in another direction?

Halprin: Well, not if you--god, no.

Riess: Better not do that?

Halprin: No. [Laughs] The point is that much of the elegance and beauty of these gardens was achieved working in the field with the workmen by Tommy who was an absolute master of the craft of gardens.

7) Consolidation of the Church Office: The Fifties

Halprin: I haven't tried to keep up with what Tommy's work was since the early fifties. And I haven't seen anything when I saw it that seemed terribly worthwhile worrying about. He had good people in his office after that but not innovative or enormously forward-reaching.

- Riess: What kind of an influence had Catherine Wurster and the returning Bill Wurster on Tommy?
- Halprin: Catherine had very little influence on Tommy, except as a person. They were friends.
- Riess: Well, did Bill and Tommy resume their good old friendship, or was that impossible now that Catherine and Bill were married, and Catherine such a strong individual?
- Halprin: I don't think they saw as much of Tommy as they had before. I can't say how much they saw each other, but my intuition tells me--
- Riess: She didn't have any impact on him?
- Halprin: Not particularly, except as a person. He was fond of her, and she was fond of him.
- Riess: But she was one of those people who really was committed to what she was doing. I don't see how that couldn't have an impact on him.
- Halprin: Well, they used to go down on Fourth of July to the Gregory house, and walk around in blue jeans and ride on horses, and drink beer and so forth, and I don't know how that necessarily would have had an impact on Tommy. Except for Catherine's person. She had a very straightforward, down-to-earth side.
- Catherine was an intellectual and a philosopher, as well as a pragmatic doer. And she was interested in areas that didn't interest Tommy, as far as I knew. So, I don't think there was much of an impact.
- Bill Wurster, after he came back, saw Tommy a fair amount, and worked with him for awhile, but then later he shifted over to my working with him a lot, and Tommy didn't work with him very much after I opened my office.
- Riess: Was that a matter of the scale of the things?
- Halprin: He could have done it if he wanted to, but he didn't want to. That's what I keep on saying. He could have hired more people very easily, but he just didn't want to. Because, after all, I just started with one person, and then I had two, and then I had three. I didn't start with a big office. I wanted not so much to become big but I wanted to work on projects that required a fair number of people working on them. But there were some gardens that I worked on with the Wurster office, including their own garden.

Riess: You don't think he assessed himself as being unable to do all of that?

Halprin: Tommy, no. I think he just didn't want to. He could have; he had enormous capacity. I think that he just felt that he was most comfortable with a small group of people whom he could direct. And that he would limit his practice to the things that he really enjoyed doing, and that he could have a personal relationship with, and that would not involve large organizations where he couldn't have a personal relationship.

And he had tried a few things, and it's a different ball game. He had done some work in housing [Valencia Gardens and Parkmerced] but they seemed peripheral to his main interests. He had worked with Saarinen on the General Motors with modest success, I think. And you have to spend an awful lot of time, you have to have a bigger staff than he had, and so forth. I think he just didn't enjoy it as much, that's all. He wanted to be his own man. That's admirable in a way.

Riess: Did you have environmental, ecological, relativistic concerns when you were in his office, and did you talk to him about those things.

Halprin: I had those concerns but I don't remember talking about it much at all with Tommy because what I remember his exploring is the questions we've been talking about, the small garden, how it could fit into people's life patterns, how you could aggregate small gardens into small communities of streets. I remember the first thing that really interested me in the office was some Belevedere houses where we tried to link them into a street, which I was very interested in doing. Those were the concerns Tommy had at that time: How the small garden could profoundly improve and enhance the life of the people who lived in it; how it is a creatively life--enhancing resource affecting families' lives.

But I always knew I wanted to get involved in the other things. Now, at the time, there weren't major questions of ecological impact that were coming up. There were no shopping centers, there were no very vast suburbs that were being built at the time, and therefore I didn't talk to Tommy very much about that. I remember thinking I wished the hell we would get into some of those things, but that was sort of towards the end, and I had a lot to do just doing the beautiful gardens, so I didn't, no.

Riess: People weren't talking about urban blight, and so on?

Halprin: Not very much at the time.

Riess: How about Telesis? Was it an active group?

Halprin: Oh, yes, yes. Telesis was active. I was one of the editors with Chris Tunnard in Harvard on one of their issues. Yes. But Tommy was not very interested in that. I keep on coming back to that. He really was not interested in that.

I think that isn't to mean that he wasn't supportive of the ideas. If you asked him about those things he would certainly agree that they had importance, but he personally didn't want to get involved. He didn't get involved very much. He didn't make speeches. He didn't give lectures. He didn't teach very much. He didn't involve himself in social issues. He didn't involve himself in anything except in gardens. They were his life.

Riess: And that was probably as much the pull of Elizabeth Gordon who got him involved there.

Halprin: In House Beautiful? Yes. She came in like a ton of bricks, and [interrupts tape] part of the reason I thought she was a bitch was she attacked Gropius and the Bauhaus for being unAmerican during the McCarthy era, and wrote stinging--one whole issue--on how these people should be thrown out of the country, on an architectural level that is, because they were non-American, and were designing in a non-American way. I remember writing a burning letter, and a lot of people did to her, and saying I never will write for your magazine again. She acted like an American Firster.

Riess: She must have been rabid.

Halprin: She was a horse's ass, as far as I was concerned.

Riess: [Laughs] And how about Sunset?

Halprin: I think they felt that he was an absolute (and I think it's true) paradigm of what Sunset meant and was, that in his designing in all events, his approach to people, he was non-elitist, although he was a socialite. He was pragmatic and addressed himself to straightforward issues that were very relevant for the average person. And he had a lot to offer in terms of how to do it; people could learn a great deal. I think that was absolutely true. And also he was not abrasive.

It's like Cliff May at the time. Have you talked with Cliff May?

Riess: No.

Halprin: You ought to talk to Cliff May. Cliff May and Tommy worked together for quite awhile, and they were both very similar in the sense that both of them were non-abrasive. Building on the thing that was right for the time, and not pushing too hard, and not pushing themselves or the world too hard, but just enough to be really good.

I think he was a terrific landscape architect, and a great craftsman, and that the movement he was part of, and exemplified here more than anybody I suppose, particularly at the very beginning, was a very important movement. But there were people who pre-dated him in this movement.

Riess: And that's the outdoor-living movement?

Halprin: No, I was thinking of modern landscape architecture, which he didn't invent. There was Andre Vera and [Gabriel] Guevrékian in France, and that guy in Florence whose name I've forgotten, and Chris Tunnard, all of whom were working at it on an artistic level, and [Roberto] Burle Marx who in a way is a much greater aesthetician. And so was Christopher Tunnard in a way. Tommy was a--I'll say it again--Tommy was a great craftsman who understood very profoundly the relationship of the materials, including the people he was working with, and the craft of making things--in my view. I think that's a very important thing to have done. He influenced a lot of people.

8) A Little Discussion of "Art" and "Artists"

Riess: And is landscape architecture a fine art?

Halprin: Well, is architecture a fine art? I think you have to understand that there is no field of landscape architecture, there are landscape architects, and Landscape Architects. Like everybody else--there is no field of medicine, there are Doctors. Some are artists, so they make it a fine art, and some of them are craftsmen and they make it a craft. Some of them are mediocre so they make it mediocre.

Riess: [Laughs] And it just depends upon who is in the ascendancy one year or another, what you read in the catalogs and magazines?

Halprin: That's right, and even then you tend not to hear the practitioners very much, but you hear all the critics. You don't hear Tommy, but you hear what someone wrote about him. Or you don't hear about a designer, you hear from a professor who isn't a designer.

Riess: I really do know that.

Halprin: And that's all I'm saying. I'm not being snide, I am being serious. When you ask me, what is the profession? I say the profession is what the practitioners in it are. At the moment it always ends up being the practitioners and how they are written about by the critics. That's all. I have a simple answer when people ask me what landscape architecture is for me, and that is, it's exactly what I'm doing--what I have done, and what I am doing now. That's landscape architecture for me and it's very different from what somebody else is doing. I think that's fair enough for Tommy. Landscape architecture for him was what he did. And it was his whole life, which was another important thing about him.

Riess: In the very beginning of your Cities book, in your own preface you talk about the long search for the meaning of art in our society.

Halprin: Well, I'm still searching. Landscape architecture to me has shifted so much away from the small scale thinking, not size, but thinking, about the environment, into really understanding the environment and people's relationship to it, and the interaction with it as the most profound form of architecture that you can possibly have. It's the art of life. And so you say, is it a fine art? It's sort of like an 1820s question.

Riess: I agree. The Bay Area is very self-conscious about those questions always, and they are asked.

Halprin: Well, there are not terribly many profound workers in this vineyard around, I'm afraid, certainly not at the University, and even amongst the practitioners. There are some very pragmatic, good people in the field, who practice and do housing projects and work for the developers and so forth. But there isn't an awful lot of philosophical debate on the questions with anybody who really knows what they're talking about, or are worth listening to, around here, I'm afraid.

We're getting off Tommy. Let's get back to it.

9) The Donnell Garden: Weaving Shapes

Tommy was very influenced by [Jean] Arp, by the work of the people in the thirties who were painting in Europe. Part of his trips there influenced him a great deal in that regard. The free forms that he got involved in, which were not his original way of working, were very influenced by the amorphous shapes that were being used a great deal at that time in painting--Miro, Arp. They were not influenced by Burle Marx.

Halprin: People later ask, "Well, were you influenced by Burle Marx?" They even ask me. "No." The fact is that I was influenced by the same thing that Burle Marx was, at that time when I was working on the Donnell garden. Because I hardly even knew about Burle Marx. But I was influenced by Miro, and Picasso and Arp. And so was Burle Marx. I think Burle carried it to its ultimate conclusion, and that is, what he did was to take it and use it as a palette, and just sort of plant it down on the ground. What he was doing was painting in the landscape, and it's just brilliant, beautiful stuff. In a funny way, from my point of view, although I love it dearly, it's not the same way that I work, or Tommy works. Tommy was always trying to evolve an aesthetic out of the material of the craft itself. He never imposed paintings on it although he was influenced by the paintings. The issue for Tommy was to evolve an aesthetic out of the nature of the site, the users, and the materials of the garden art, not to impose painterly concerns on it. He was searching for a garden art to enhance people's lives and enrich them.

Riess: In Messenger's thesis she writes, "...the broad, curving forms of the [Donnell] garden are somewhat reflective of the work of both Aalto and Roberto Burle Marx but there is a restraint here that is not apparent in the designs of Burle Marx... The design for the garden is a clear reference to cubism with its planes of different textures and overlapping panels in space, although this may have been an unconscious application of such concepts."

Halprin: Well, I wouldn't say so. I'm trying to remember when I was drawing on it, thinking about it. I was very influenced myself at that time by the paintings of Miro and Arp, and I'm sure that I was influenced in synthesizing in some way those things with the natural landscape, those influences of the real appreciation-- (By the way, when she uses the word "cubism," Arp and Miro were not cubists. I wonder whether she knows that.)

Anyway, what I was trying to do was to organize shapes that would all weave together, almost like a Persian carpet, and integrate with that the natural landscape so that the forms from the natural landscape would enter it and the two would come together in the new form of art which would be natural landscape and man-made landscape integrating together. That was what I was really trying to do. That's really all I've tried to do all my life.

It's interesting in a sense that the first major garden I ever did, which was that one, was so successful. That very often happens, that the first major thing you do is so successful, and then you retrogress sometimes, and take a long time to come back to it.

Riess: Walking into that [Donnell garden] space would be a different experience from anything before.

Halprin: I think so.

And there were a lot of things: there were views and the way the trees were used in it, and the composition, and the idea of-- and Tommy had it too, and he did it but he didn't talk about it a great deal--of the choreography of gardens. Have you ever read those pieces of mine on the choreography of gardens? The idea was that one of the essential qualities of the landscape art is that you only experience it when you are in motion, otherwise it becomes static, and it's one of the major big differences between the small Japanese garden, and the American garden, or the Renaissance garden. You can see it. There is no kinesthetic quality about [the Japanese garden].

And a major effort there [Donnell] was using the site. In fact, it was thought of starting from the road, the main road: you came in, opened the gate, drove up, and that road up was very carefully designed so you came up below the swimming pool area, the bath house, and then you came around it to the upper area, and then there was a path that comes down, around, and goes down in through some rocks, and then you come into the space. And that's a long, intricate, choreographed sequence, which was the major effort. Then when you're in it, the thing itself starts spiralling around, moving and so on.

Now, you see those kinds of experiences I can articulate to an extent. Tommy would never articulate it but he sure did it. But it's essentially, I think, one of the reasons for his greatness, that is that he did understand this progression in the landscape, and this understanding--(the word cubism is a very superficial way of understanding these things)--that the garden is not just a visual phenomenon, but it's something you move around in, go behind, use the natural elements in, and play the natural elements against the geometric elements, and so forth.

How you handle all of that is a very intricate form of art, in some ways much more intricate than architecture, it's more related to theater. In that I think he had great, greatness in his understanding of that. Now, that I don't think has been adequately talked of. You see, in this [Donnell garden] this is not just a curvilinear line, but this is something that brings you, the participant, out here, you sort of whirl around here and come back, and then this gives you a different sense of motion.

Riess: Yes.

Halprin: And the ones in here in Tommy's Gardens are for People I guess I like most are the ones where you're moving. They're not just static images.

Riess: Well, he does talk about it to the extent that he talks about the "arrival" as an experience.

Halprin: I think he was terribly good at it. From my point of view, one of the essential ingredients of the landscape art is this choreography of sequence.

How are we doing?

Riess: Oh, I know that you've been looking at your watch...

10) In the Light of Landscape Architecture History

Halprin: If you have one or two more searing questions?

Riess: Searing, no, no, but if you have a sort of overview that you haven't given yet which you would like to give--

Halprin: On Tommy, you mean?

Riess: Yes.

Halprin: I would say that Tommy has occupied a very major niche in the field of landscape architecture, and that he has performed an important function in a transition period moving the world from old-fashioned landscape architecture and the relevance of how the landscape fits into everyday life which has led to housing and small-scale suburban landscapes, and people's use of the landscape. He is a very important practitioner whose influence will be felt for a long time, and is very, very profound. I think it's parallel to what Bill Wurster did in architecture, and it's interesting that they worked together.

In a sense both of them are very interesting because they were great professionals. Wurster never rose to the aesthetic artistry of Maybeck, or Frank Lloyd Wright, or Aalto, on an aesthetic level. But in a social sense, and on influence sense for good, I think he exceeded them in many ways. I would say the same thing about Tommy.

Halprin: As an influence on young people in the profession, I think Tommy's influence is enormous. He had some major figures in his office who carried forward and developed from their apprenticeship with him.

You can perceive Tommy and Bill Wurster as parallel influences in the development of a style of living in the Bay Area, through architecture and landscape, both independently and knitted together, that really improved people's lives, personally. That new approach to designing architecture and gardens as a total environment for people to use, and to enhance the simple pleasures of living, has not only influenced people here but also has spread out throughout the country, maybe throughout the world. On that level I think their influence cannot be exceeded.

Riess: Nationally now we're talking about?

Halprin: Even internationally. And historically I think that will be the important contribution that Bill Wurster and Tommy Church have made. They worked together and they both had exactly the same point of view on that level.

Riess: When you say somebody occupies a niche, I think there are many meanings of that, but it sounds basically like a really small space.

Halprin: The niche?

Riess: Yes.

Halprin: Well, then, strike that word. What I'm trying to differentiate in my own head as I'm saying this, is that Tommy left out a lot of things, which have been carried on by the next generation who were much influenced by him. The public work, the public landscape, the urban landscape which neither of them dealt with anyway, the inner city problems, the socially relevant problems of housing, the streetscape, the idea of cities as an important investment of energy and creativity, all of those were outside Tommy's purview. As I said he remains an absolute paradigm in the best sense of what Sunset magazine is talking to and about. And I think that's enough for any one man's lifetime.

Riess: I think that's very interesting if you feel very strongly it's not just a Bay Area phenomenon.

Halprin: I think that it isn't. As you go through subdivisions of houses throughout the country, even throughout the world, you will see in the house and its garden the influence of Tommy Church.

Halprin:

There is his great contribution. He has impressed on the world the notion that people's lives are enhanced by gardens and houses which are linked together as a unity--as a kind of inevitable living and aesthetic synergy. Having shown this and demonstrated how valuable it is in people's lives it has become a universal requirement, a way of living for us all.

Final Typist: Keiko Sugimoto

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## APPENDICES

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Thomas D. Church  
Evening Discussion with the Northern California Chapter  
of the American Society of Landscape Architects  
February 9, 1971

Transcript courtesy of Michael M. Laurie

CHURCH:

I come out reluctantly...I can talk about myself endlessly.

Now what I think, I don't really know whether to tell you or not.

I started my practice in 1930. Well, the practice of landscape architecture was quite different then than it is today. You were a plantsman. If an architect or a client called you in on a job, it was to know what kind of a tree to plant in a certain position. If you were to arrive on the job and say, 'I think the driveway is in the wrong place,' you could get fired, right then.

Well, now today, or 20 years ago, the profession has gotten to a position where architects welcome landscape architects on the job. And the client was very apt to call the landscape architect at the same time as he called the architect, or even before. So that was a big advance in the standing of the profession. Architects like Wurster and Gardner Dailey would say to clients, 'Have you talked to your landscape architect?' or 'Have you talked to Tommy Church yet?' That was very flattering except it saved him hours and hours going through the whole thing. That sort of thing started 20 years ago.

Now, in the profession in the offices that are operating (we're in the backwater as you can see by just the decor), they are really called in as a professional, as a more important contribution to the project than the engineer or architect. Because people have said to me 'We're all frustrated architects,' and the first thing I do on the job is I design the house. I mean, to hell with the landscape. You know, the rooms ought to be oriented this way and the drive ought to come in here."

Today I am sympathetic but a little bewildered about what the position of young people out of school is going to be in the field. What their objectives are going to be and what their future is going to be. Because there seem to be some more important things coming up than what happens in someone's San Francisco backyard.

So, the field has broadened to the extent that the profession has got to assume certain responsibilities for all these things that are going on now. What happens to our ecology? If we don't have any more plants, what happens to our oxygen? What happens to our water? I am sure the profession is going to get involved in this. This is a long way, quite a different thing from what I have been involved with. A client has certain needs or wants and how do you satisfy them? This is a very crucial thing but it has nothing to do with the welfare or well-being of the community.



Most of my activity has been with a personal client who has a private objective. This may be contributing nothing to the general well-being of the country as a whole, however this is what I've been asked to do and this is the way I make my living and it's also the way that I get my satisfaction. Maybe that won't happen again. I don't want to tell young people what kind of practice, what kind of office I have because they won't have that kind of thing. It may not exist for them. In the second place, they won't want it.

I'm asked once in awhile how I feel about minority groups and I say I'm very sympathetic to their problems. The minority group that I really feel sorry for is the very rich. And if I can just help them get their lives straightened out then I will have done something for a minority group.

I'm talking almost entirely about private practice in terms of residential work. I don't think that I am the last residential landscape architect, but I don't think many others do it. Yet the need for good residential design is not going to disappear in this generation. It may in the next generation if we're all living in condominiums.

How does a young person decide what to do: work for the forest service, planning commission, the government or a private office? You're not going to make a lot of money out of it. So what gives you the most pleasure? Is it designing a great marina, a sub-division or a park or what not, or is it doing small gardens? Our gardens are small. They're expensive but they're small. And that's the question: How are you going to get the most pleasure out of your practice and out of what

you do, what you think and the people you meet? Some of the established professionals drop private gardens as soon as possible. When you first start out you take anything. You've got the telephone bills coming in. The minute you can drop private work the average office does so and goes into supposedly a remunerative operation. Now I don't understand this because we did this once; went into commercial work and university work and we were losing money. We went back into residential work and started making money again. Why is this? Why do these guys drop it? They do<sup>so</sup>/for two reasons. One is that it doesn't make enough money and second, they don't want to meet ladies... 'My lawn is sinking...' and so on. I like those ladies. And I like talking to them on the phone; I like holding their hands. I like everything about it. I charge quite high fees for it. If you're going to keep even a small office open to do private residential work you need fees which will let you stay open. / <sup>An interesting</sup> thing about fees is that you can get better fees in California in residential work than you can in Connecticut or any place on the East Coast, because they're used to the nursery landscaper doing their plans for nothing. The guy makes his money when he does the job. The idea of paying somebody \$500 or \$1,000 just for a drawing is difficult to accept. That's what I found 20 years ago when I started going East to do a lot of work. Today it is not so true anymore. After all I'm 3,000 miles away. They saw something in House Beautiful so the fact that my fees are twice as much as the local guy doesn't matter. My fees are still at the point-- we've never done much bookkeeping on that. If we come out at the end of the year in the black we don't care. We don't add

it up. When we started adding it up this year we found we were losing a lot of money. Some other job was making it up, of course, but we were losing money. So the fees went up. I've talked too long and I want to get into a question and answer period now.

Q: So far you've spoken mainly about residential work but at the University of California at Santa Cruz, you've contributed a great deal to that campus and I'd like to hear a little bit about your philosophy of campus landscape design.

A: I get invited quite often to talk about my philosophy. And I wish I knew what it was...You know if you're busy. Some people can analyse what they're doing, explain the philosophy of their design and so on. This is something that the Lord didn't give me. Other people have been able to do it. It's not always right, but... What my philosophy of design is. I'll come back to the question in a moment--My 'philosophy' is that the client is usually right. I have a lot of arguments over that one. I talk to a lot of landscape architects all over the country and they say, 'You know, if it weren't for the goddam architect and if it weren't for that client, I could do a good job.' So where are you? Building an ivory tower for yourself. That's not the point. The point is that the client has certain ideas of what it is he wants. Your problem is first to take his ideas, if they're any good at all, and make something out of them. Maybe it isn't what you would do, but if you've got a clean sheet of paper and no client or a problem and a house, you're going to do what you want to live with. That's not the



point, it's what they're going to live with. So if you find that a client has lousy ideas, you keep a complete dead pan. You don't ? — You work very carefully with him and you can come out with something good but is still what he wants.

I do a great many one-day, one-contact conferences. The architect, builders, whoever is involved, are all there that day. The idea is to pull the job together and decide what's going to happen. There's enough talent in that group to carry out any ideas that come up during the day; the Client's ideas, anybody else's ideas. I send back a preliminary, fairly firm drawing and that's the last of it.

If in the first ten minutes, I am asked about all the problems, 'What do you think?' I say, 'I don't think anything; I wish I hadn't come.' I make a bargain with them. 10 o'clock we'll walk around for an hour and look at the drawings and they talk for the first hour about what they want, what they don't like, what what they'd like to have if they could afford it. And I tell them what's good about them. I tell them anything I have. We sit down and sketch because I always make sure that we've got a topo and a card table and we roll the thing out and we sketch it. So you have about five client/professional conferences all going on in that same day; instead of going back to the office and producing a drawing and they say 'I don't like it,' so you go back and do some more. By three o'clock we have an accepted preliminary design scheme that the architect approves of, that the client approves of and all you have to do is go back and draw it up. That's one day. That's \$500 plus travel. Which isn't very much to make



on a job, but if that's the end of it... This is what's known as a consulting practice.

I have three draftsmen now and that just about does the kind of practice that I'm interested in; each of us can choose what we want.

When I started it wouldn't have occurred to anyone to have done anything but private gardens in the thirties as a landscape architect. The other kind of practice wasn't available then even if it had been to Olmsted much earlier.

Q: How many offices were there in the Bay area when you started?

A: Four or five. Gilkey? Colton. Van Pelt. Cormak and some others. All doing mostly private work.

Q: Your involvement in University campus work must involve a philosophy of living and teaching in a way which is separate from your relationship with clients in residential garden work.

A: I am devoted to the Santa Cruz campus. We got the buildings where we wanted them and we think we'll save the Redwoods if they cut the registration to 15,000. But I think I have been more successful at U.C. Berkeley and Stanford. Maybe it's because there's an existing pattern, you can see what you're doing. Remodeling is great because you see the before and the after. When you're starting something fresh you only see the after. I have great hopes for Santa Cruz. It's like San Francisco. In spite of highrise buildings and

freeways, you can't ruin San Francisco. The site is so dramatic that it takes an earthquake or something terrific to change San Francisco. But you can ruin San Francisco eventually and you can ruin the Santa Cruz campus eventually. 2,000 acres of record-growth Redwoods. It looks as though no matter how many people, buildings and roads are put in, you couldn't possibly ruin that campus. It hasn't been ruined to date. The library which is 160 foot square, four stories high, is only a few hundred feet from the next building, which is 400 feet long and four stories high and you can't see one from the other. There are so many trees. Well, if we disturb the drainage patterns enough and we put too many people in there it's going to have some effect so many years from now. 30 years from now, when the campus is finished and supposedly 27,000 students are there, seven times the present number, it's not going to be the same as it is now.

Q: If you had to do the Santa Cruz campus today again what would you do differently?

A: I would start the master plan designing the road system instead of the buildings. That is a rough terrain. I worked on the master plan team and we had an aerial overlay which was accurate enough for our purposes. But we were so fascinated by the building groups and their relation to each other we figured the roads could be worked out. But when the first buildings started we found the topographic condition so rough, the road had to be done and then the buildings had to be shifted.

We could have saved a lot of trouble and reorganization. Although the overall concept was not basically changed.

Q: What is planned for the open meadow areas at Santa Cruz?

A: I can only think of Black Angus. The central meadow still at the moment remains untouched.

(Discussion of Santa Cruz followed; also Stanford and university campuses in general. Not transcribed.)

Q: I am sure that you have experimented in the early days with new ideas from architecture and art. Are you still experimenting? Once you have complied with all the constraints and the clients' wishes, there is still an element which is yourself. I have seen a change in your design direction in recent years and I don't think it is to do with the clients. It is to do with your own feelings about design and form. What do you think these influences are and are you still experimenting?

A: I do kid myself that I produce for a client what they think they want. There's another face to that which we call in the office the "shock treatment." That is to suggest something so different from anything that is in the client's background, thinking, etc, that there is a, 'Gee, that's great; never would have thought of it,' reaction. They are still basically getting the things which they think they want. And maybe that's what you detect. I don't know.

(Example of 10-foot wide swimming pool 'round edge of small Georgetown garden to save trees in center.)

Q: A good many of your forms are formal and strict. Through the years you see the same quality. This form gives your work quality. Have you ever done much whirlygiq stuff?

A: I'll tell you. After Garrett worked in the office for a few weeks, I experimented with it.

Discussion of formal/informal design: plant growth hides asymmetric plan.

What people are after is a feeling of relaxation. This is informal but the asymmetric plan may be relaxing.

Q: What is the difference between gardens designed by you in 1940 and those you are designing in 1965 or '70?

A: In the early forties I'd studied all the great gardens, with terraces and architectural masonry. Like Capability Brown we did away with that but now by the sixties I'm back to the formal layout, a complete circle. I think I'm treating them more delicately not concentrating on the line itself but just the basic lines, the bones. No matter how much you hide it it's still there. The basic outlined with the third dimension results in something easy to look at with more severity. You start out with a formal layout, then do an informal overlay on it in three dimensions, then it really goes wild. If you've got a natural formation like woods or swamps that's another thing, but if you're starting with a flat acre in a sub-division, surrounded by other houses, fenced, you can't paint nature inside of that and get it to come in and say anything.



QA: I'd like to hear your ideas on the role of the conceptual designer as opposed to many of the things which are analytical in basis. There is a sense, for example, if you analyze a problem in sufficient depth that the design falls out of the analysis. One of the outstanding characteristics that has come out of your practice is conceptual design. Where does form come from in the design process? Given a site, client, program, someone has to give them form. Your forms are very disciplined.

A: I like what you say and it is a great compliment. All I can say is that it must be a gift.

A: It is his ability to make decisions as an extension of the analytical process.

A: I do have the tendency to make the decision and analyze it later.

Q: You have established your name as a landscape architect on an international basis. Have you developed a formula of activity which led to this? A process or a program?

A: (D. Baylis) The moment that you have gardens made and some good photographs, it follows. He photographed his own gardens. He works and turns out gardens. Who else does that?

A: The only kind of practice that I'm interested in is a design process which I do myself. That's why I stay small. In the fifties we had enough of a reputation, jobs coming in from all over the country, I could have had 50 or 60 draftsmen; but that didn't interest me then and still doesn't.

# Thomas D. Church



## *His Role in American Landscape Architecture*

by Pam-Anela Messenger

The Wall Street crash of 1929 drastically altered the scope and nature of the work of American landscape architects and architects. The number and size of large private firms that subsisted on the "great places" was significantly reduced, and smaller practices with a different clientele emerged. By 1933, when the economic revolution was underway, there were a vast number of moderate upper-middle-income suburban and rural residential properties which necessarily brought about an entirely new approach to design. This epochal change was guided in large part in California by the work of one man, Thomas Dolliver Church.

Church, the "Grand Old Man" of landscape architecture,<sup>1</sup> began his career in San Francisco at the bottom

of the depression. The route to a burgeoning practice was quite naturally a circuitous one.

He was born in Boston on April 27, 1902, to Albert and Wilda Wilson Church. His father was an inventor who developed the first widely produced washing machine, and his mother, an elocutionist, appeared on some of KGO radio station's earliest programs in San Francisco. She also coached drama at the University of California, Berkeley.<sup>2</sup> His career as a garden designer may well have begun long before any formal training: His mother swears that he showed an unusual interest in flowers at age three; at 12 he redesigned the family garden.<sup>3</sup>

The landscape "prodigy" entered law school, however, at the University of California, Berkeley, in



1918, thus following in his grandfather's footsteps. A course in the history of landscaping spurred his decision to change his major and he completed his degree in landscape architecture in 1922. From Berkeley, he went to Harvard for a master's degree. He won the Sheldon Traveling Fellowship and his studies of gardens in Italy, France and Spain provided material for his thesis, "A Study of Mediterranean Gardens and Their Adaptability to California Conditions (1926-1927)."

Church returned to the United States in 1927 and taught at Ohio State for two years. He came back west in 1929 to teach at the University of California, Berkeley, and began to work for Floyd Mick, the Oakland landscape architect.

Church's first major job in 1929 was the design of Pasatiempo Estates, near Santa Cruz, for golfer Marion Hollins. In this first large assignment, Church demonstrated his great sensitivity to site conditions. Each house was thoughtfully situated so as not to disrupt the area's character and at the same time have its own special aspects. The houses and the gardens reflected the vogue for Mediterranean design especially favored in larger country estates in southern California.<sup>5</sup> These smaller versions of the Spanish-Mexican courtyard house reflected not only the concept of outdoor living but also fulfilled the client's demand for low maintenance gardens. Church's characteristic restraint in design and his use of native plants cut costs in time and money without sacrificing beauty and usefulness.

Pasatiempo Estates occupied a major portion of Church's time for about three years, but in 1932 he opened his office in a small warehouse in San Francisco at 402 Jackson Street. Today the neighborhood has become Jackson Square, a landmark district of San Francisco, and the old warehouses have been transformed into fashionable shops and designers' offices.

"We started our practice in the bottom of the depression when simplicity and ease of maintenance were basic requirements. We soon realized that good design was not only compatible with this idea but that the two were madly in love."<sup>6</sup> Church's clients 44 years ago were not neces-

sarily wealthy. Gardens, therefore, had to be functional, withstand high use with minimal maintenance and cost. Church sought to recapture the sympathetic relationship between house and garden, and the feeling for scale that had been intrinsic in the gardens of Le Notre, as well as in Renaissance Italy and 19th century England,<sup>7</sup> and to combine that relationship with a simplicity of solution.<sup>8</sup>

As a member of the editorial staff of *California Arts and Architecture* in the early '30s, he defined American gardening heritage and discussed design principles. He stated that, "Our garden heritage has come mainly from this English landscape gardening precedent; also from the vulgar German adaptation of the French parterre garden,"<sup>9</sup> and "This is a new era in garden making, because while many things have entered our life to make the problem complex, our ideas and requirements tend toward simplicity of solution."<sup>10</sup>

The bulk of Church's work in the early '30s was for small gardens on San Francisco townhouse lots. He strongly advocated the garden as an outdoor living-room, described by Fletcher Steele as early as 1924.<sup>11</sup> Church was not the first nor the only designer of the time to subscribe to this theory, but he was probably the one designer most responsible for the wide application of it in northern California. He urged an end to the usual front lawn with foundation planting around the house, typical of the American front yard.<sup>12</sup> Porches, verandas and terraces became generous areas for activities, in keeping with Steele's suggestions,<sup>13</sup> and were integral parts of the house and the entire garden. The new approach was still somewhat formal when executed and drew rather heavily from the past. Typical was Church's own San Francisco garden of 1934,<sup>14</sup> an interesting geometric design of clipped hedges and topiary, reminiscent of 17th century French Baroque gardens,<sup>15</sup> yet seeming to have been designed without any consideration for function or active use.

During this era, Church wrote a series of articles for *California Arts and Architecture* on the small garden, illustrated with photographs and plans of his garden designs. Un-

fortunately, this garden type was seen by some as a style and was even given the rather inappropriate title of Formist.<sup>16</sup> The style was mimicked elsewhere indiscriminately and without consideration of its original concept for outdoor living.<sup>17</sup>

In 1937 Church went to Finland and met Alvar Aalto.<sup>18</sup> It has been suggested that Aalto's work has had a significant influence upon Church's subsequent designs.<sup>19</sup> In later years, Thomas Church and his wife, Elizabeth, delved into the interior design and furniture business. They had a small showroom and the San Francisco franchise for Aalto's glassware and furniture.<sup>20</sup> The curvilinear forms and asymmetry of Aalto's building, furniture and glassware designs are easily applied to garden forms, i.e., in the Donnell garden. There the composition of space and the treatment of edges in particular are approached in a different manner from that previously seen in garden design.

In an exhibition of landscape architecture sponsored by the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1937, where several *avant garde* European designers as well as noted Americans exhibited their work, Thomas Church was awarded first prize for a city house and garden design. The public ballot agreed with the exhibition judges and further voted a special mention for another Church entry.<sup>21</sup>

Thomas Church had already advanced a great deal in freeing California gardens from the hackneyed Spanish ox-cart tradition<sup>22</sup> and from that English gardening precedent that would glorify a specimen monkey-puzzle tree on an expanse of park-like grounds. Church never rejected the past in toto because he recognized, from an artist's viewpoint, the value of lessons learned from his predecessors. From 1930 almost to the next decade, Church stuck to the principles of a carefully calculated, although eclectic, system of design, even though he was continually experimenting with new forms and materials.

In dealing with the typical townhouse garden of San Francisco, Church began experimenting with angles and forms which would visually alter the apparent size of the garden spaces. In 1937, he designed for Mr. and Mrs. Jerd Sullivan one



such garden which was featured in many magazines and which seems to have had a great impact upon other designers, as well as on the public. The final design was chosen from four different schemes.<sup>24</sup> Through the use of diagonally planted hedges and paving strips, the garden was made to have a less linear appearance. Not only is the garden visually interesting, but it also achieves the goal of low maintenance by using concrete mowing strips and slow-growing hedges requiring clipping only two or three times a year.

At the time, a great fervor was sweeping the design world. The theories of people like Walter Gropius, Alvar Aalto, Moholy-Nagy, Piet Mondrian and others were zealously discussed by students and contemporary designers as experiments in new ways of perceiving space.

Occasional exhibits in conjunction with other artists and architects were the opportunities that Church took to delve into abstract theory and forms.<sup>25</sup>

As the World War II effort increased, designing private residences and gardens became less and less possible. Labor and materials were virtually unobtainable. Architects and landscape architects turned toward housing projects for their livelihood. Valencia Gardens, in the Mission District of San Francisco, was one of the more significant projects at that time for Church's office.<sup>26</sup> It was part of the Housing Administration's slum clearance program. Church and architects William W. Wurster and Harry A. Thomsen, Jr., sited the buildings according to climatic conditions so that the large public courtyards would receive sunlight without winds. Low brick walls lined the broad, curving raised beds in a somewhat formal design, appropriate to a city development of this kind. Apparently it was the correct approach since the project may be seen today in much the same form as when it was completed in 1943.

A breakthrough in Church's office was the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's San Francisco project known as Parkmerced.<sup>27</sup> Metropolitan Life purchased a 200-acre golf course site; the planning began in 1941, but not until 1950 were the eleven 13-story buildings and the 113

two-story buildings completed. Architects Thomsen and Wilson with Church designed those garden apartments so that every living room faced a landscaped patio. On this impressively large scale, the automobile was separated from the dwellings via pie-shaped blocks and internal courts.<sup>28</sup> Parkmerced was very popular and like Valencia Gardens exists today in its original basic form and layout.

Jobs began to come in from all over the country and Church's reputation spread. Still, large jobs and commercial projects remained part of the range of work. The nation's first central-mall shopping center was designed in Framingham, Massachusetts, and Thomas Church and Associates were the landscape architects.<sup>29</sup>

The Donnell garden (1948, in collaboration with Lawrence Halprin and George Rockrise) was designed on a hilltop encircled by native oaks and overlooked the Sonoma Valley. No buildings existed on the site when the pool and terrace were built. The broad, curving forms of the garden are in some ways reflective of the work of both Aalto and Roberto Burle-Marx, but there is a restraint here that is not apparent in the designs of Burle-Marx, and the absence of any attempt to reproduce a two-dimensional composition on a three-dimensional space. The design for the garden is a clear reference to Cubism with its planes of different textures and overlapping panels in space, although this may have been an unconscious application of such concepts. It differs from the standard abstract art forms applying the principles of Cubism — the continuous changing positions of objects in space; simultaneity, etc. — in three dimensions rather than two. The entire scheme not only coheres internally, but extends to the countryside. The shape of the pool and the edges of the paving are actually repetitions of the forms of the rolling hills and winding salt marshes of the valley. The sculpture by Adaline Kent was designed expressly for the pool and its form derived from the same sources. "We knew it was something special," recalls George Rockrise.<sup>30</sup> The Donnell garden owes a great deal of its beauty and success to the combined efforts of a

group of artists and not to a single designer alone.

In the same year, 1948, other gardens, like the Martin residence at Aptos Beach, were publicized and became gardens for which Church is most widely known. This is particularly interesting because such gardens represent only a small portion of Church's work and are not characteristic of his entire career, but only of a period.

The Donnell and Martin gardens, like nearly all of the work that has come out of Church's office, are today, nearly 30 years after their construction, intact and possess a timeless quality. This fact is what has enabled Church to maintain his excellent reputation.

It is well known that a landscape architect's design or an architect's design can only be as good as its execution. A negligent contractor can easily destroy the design concept. Church, throughout his career, has maintained a close surveillance over the construction of his gardens. For many years he ran his own construction business so that his gardens were designed and built by him and his staff. For almost 40 years, going back to their first association at Pasatiempo, Floyd Gerow worked closely with Church. Together they made a team which seemed destined to succeed. Their close relationship and rapport made possible the design and construction of many gardens without the necessity of detailed working drawings.

By the early 1950s, Church's reputation had spread over the world. His employees, his colleagues, his clients and the general public were enchanted by Thomas Church the landscape genius as well as by Tommy Church the personality.

In those busy years of the '50s, when Casey Kawamoto and Jack Stafford were part of his staff, Church took on such large-scale projects as the award-winning General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan, where he worked with Eero Saarinen.<sup>31</sup> He became the landscape architect for U.S. embassies in Havana, Cuba, and Rabat, Morocco. In 1951, he was awarded the Fine Arts Medal of the American Institute of Architects, the highest honor conferred by the A.I.A. in fields other than architecture.



In 1955, Church published his first book, *Gardens are for People*,<sup>32</sup> in which he expounded his design theory and illustrated his gardens with his own photographs.

Even though large-scale commercial and institutional projects brought renown to Church's office, he discovered that they were not profitable.<sup>33</sup> Many of his colleagues have said that Church's forte has always been the design of the private garden and that he preferred to maintain a small office in order to have more control over the quality of work that bore his name.

*The only kind of practice that I'm interested in is a design process which I do myself. That's why I stay small. In the '50s we had enough of a reputation — jobs coming in from all over the country — I could have had 50 or 60 draftsmen, but that didn't interest me then and still doesn't.*

*The need for good residential design is not going to disappear in this generation.*<sup>34</sup>

A closer look at several of his outstanding works has many rewards:

#### 1936: The Clark House Woodside, California

In this early garden from the mid-'30s, Thomas Church combined a variety of theories from the historical past and blended them with forward-looking design concepts of the day.

The site, in the rolling Woodside Hills, was surrounded by scattered native oaks and some shrubs. The ground was a hard, clayish sandstone and there was virtually no vegetation on the property itself at the time of construction.

The owners collaborated with Church to obtain a design that would fill all their requirements and satisfy their aesthetic leanings. Architect Hervey Parke Clark and Church sited the house together, the final position being chosen because it had the least severe site constraints and allowed for the desired entrance and garden orientations. One of Church's criteria for the siting of a house had to do with orienting different rooms in the house to desired exposures, e.g., the kitchen and breakfast area to the east, etc. When the position was selected, the driveway and courtyard had to be cut down to

about three feet to achieve a flat surface.

Twenty-three Lombardy poplars were planted in ivy groundcover to line the entry drive. This rather formal approach is reflective of the Beaux Arts concept of symmetry and order which was the basis of Church's early training and education.

In the courtyard miners blasted holes through the sandstone so that the hard surfaces of the yard and walls could be relieved by plantings of aralias and pleached sycamores. A California live oak planted at the front door completed the picture for the approach to the house.

The problem of entry solved, the task of designing the larger garden to the south presented a major challenge for Church. Some important views from the house were involved so the chief concern was how to make the fairly narrow piece of land appear larger and deeper than it was, and still retain the views. His solution was to lay out two 16-foot parallel promenades shaded with olive trees, bordering a grass panel centered on the living room of the house. Borrowing from Italian Renaissance artists who used *trompe l'oeil* to give their paintings greater depth, Church planted the trees in pairs which were placed at closer spacings as their distances from the house increased. The farthest trees on both paths are three feet closer together than the ones nearest the house. Such an adaptation of painterly illusion shows how Church as an artist supplies theory to the garden.

The choice of olive trees for the promenades was in keeping with the clients' request for low maintenance; also, olive trees would remain small enough to permit the close planting without destroying the scale of the garden or obstructing the views.

The paths and edges of the garden design reflected the somewhat formal and simple line of Clark's house. This is in accordance with Church's conviction that, "The design [of the garden] is influenced by the house. The house dominates the area and must be allowed to dictate the general lines of the garden."<sup>35</sup>

Over the past 40 years, alterations and additions have, of course, been made, but the original layout is

basically the same. The house was all white at first and complemented by the simple, rather formal garden with gray trees and russet surfaces. Then, freer, curving lines of planting and paving replaced rectilinear edges. It was in this phase that the garden and house were featured in *Sunset*.<sup>36</sup> Within a few years, the notion of freer forms appealed to the owners and they carried it further by removing almost all of the low wall that separated lawn and patio. The lawn edge was altered from the straight line to a curving one, not unlike the forms of Alvar Aalto's architecture (e.g., the Library at Viipuri, Finland) and glassware. Church, who by then had been to Europe with Wurster and met Aalto, was consulted. He suggested that a "lightning flash" of lawn be brought around the olive tree at the edge of the lawn as a finishing touch to tie the composition together. While the new lines may be seen as emulations of Aalto, they are more easily related to Andrew Jackson Downing's description of the picturesque landscape with the flowing, graceful, curvilinear forms and lines of nature.<sup>37</sup>

#### 1951: San Francisco, California

In the days before it was crowded with apartment buildings, Telegraph Hill was a green oasis sparsely dotted by the homes of San Francisco's early Italians. Olive and fruit trees among vegetable and flower gardens covered the northwesterly slopes overlooking San Francisco Bay.

By 1951, when Thomas Church was hired to transform an abandoned neighborhood vegetable garden, a three unit apartment building occupied the north end of this lot, surrounded on all sides by other apartments and narrow, confined backyards.

The backyard was a typical one for San Francisco: steep, long, narrow and hemmed in on all sides. In addition to the run-off problems inherent in such hillside lots, there were underground springs which caused year-round ponding. Drainage had to be a major consideration in the design concept.

In the beginning, the clients suggested that there might be three spaces delineated in the garden to correspond to the three apartments.



Church took their suggestion into account when he worked out the grading problems. Terracing the lot helped alleviate the site's major problems and at the same time brought about the realization of the idea for the separate areas. Excess run-off was channeled by the subtle grading into a drainage system designed to carry off water from the underground springs as well.

In dealing with the problem of decreasing the narrow, linear appearance of the garden space, Church reverted to the concept he had used in the 1937 garden for the Jerd Sullivans. In the Sullivan garden he used a right angle to cut across the ground plane with the effect being that the viewer's eye follows diagonal lines, made by intersections of different materials, across the garden. The result is, of course, a visual illusion of greater space and depth.

In this garden of the '50s, however, the situation was further complicated by the great differences in elevation which had to be figured into the concept for breaking up the linearity. Here, then, Church used a series of diagonals set at angles to the property edges. At each change in level a right angle turn is introduced so that there is no direct line through the garden, but rather a series of traverses. The directional changes and the changes in grade form four distinct areas or *rooms* in the garden. The *rooms* can have completely different characters without detracting from the whole garden design because the materials of the structural elements — the hedges, paths, steps, etc. — are uniform throughout, like the walls, floors, mouldings of a house. The garden becomes, much as the gardens of ancient Egypt, Greece or Rome, an extension of the house, where living continues virtually uninterrupted by the change from indoors to outdoors.

Although the geometrical forms and asymmetrical composition of this garden indicate Cubism as the likely conceptual source, it must be stated that Church probably did not consciously select these forms because they were Cubistic, but rather because they suited the situation.

It is a masterfully executed design that is at once a showplace for plants and sculpture, and a work of art in

itself, with multiple viewpoints possible from the different levels within the garden as well as from points outside. The geometric forms make it a rather highly organized environment, conducive to the high degree of maintenance required of a garden showplace. The 40 x 100 ft. open air garden has accommodated as many as 150 people without being crowded.

The garden and apartments share an entrance from the street. Entering along the east side of the building, one must come up a series of steps into the garden. A glimpse of topiary and the corner of another set of steps draws the visitor into the garden. A complete view is possible only from the higher terraces and from the stairwell to the other apartments.

After a time, it became undesirable to the owner to keep up with the whims of changing tenants, so the garden became her private domain as they moved away and new tenants, without expectations, came in. She was then able to care for and cultivate favorite plants and provide a showcase for the other apartments to look upon. Today she uses the garden for entertaining as well as for teaching horticulture classes. Each terrace, or *room*, is a different type of garden, but carefully integrated with the whole design.

#### 1959-1962: Hillsborough, California

Many designers feel that the remodeling of a house and/or garden is in some respects a greater challenge than beginning with a bare site. There are existing structures and plantings which have to be carefully considered and, therefore, mistakes may be more obvious than in the case of a vacant lot which cannot be compared to a previously existing situation. Often a building is not sited in the best manner and it is necessary to compensate for problems surrounding it. In the case of the house on the grounds of Strawberry Hill, some distinct structural features, like the stone bridge, walls and road on the north side of the property were set, and everything new had to be coordinated to harmonize with these features. The key questions then involved knowing what to retain, what to modify and what to repeat in the rest of the

garden. The more distinct structural elements here were built upon by Church as he restored the garden. The curving stone wall around the redwoods echoes the arch of the old bridge. The same stones are used around the pool and to retain the lawn terraces. The repetition of such details is one of the key factors in tying the whole composition together.

#### 1962: Atherton, California

The site for this home and garden in Atherton was a ranch where race horses were kept. It was purchased around 1961 by a steel magnate and his wife who wanted to leave their San Francisco home in Pacific Heights to retire. They decided to build a different house here to fit their needs and desires, rather than remodeling the existing Spanish style house on the property. As he was a polo enthusiast, they retained the stables and field for the horses.

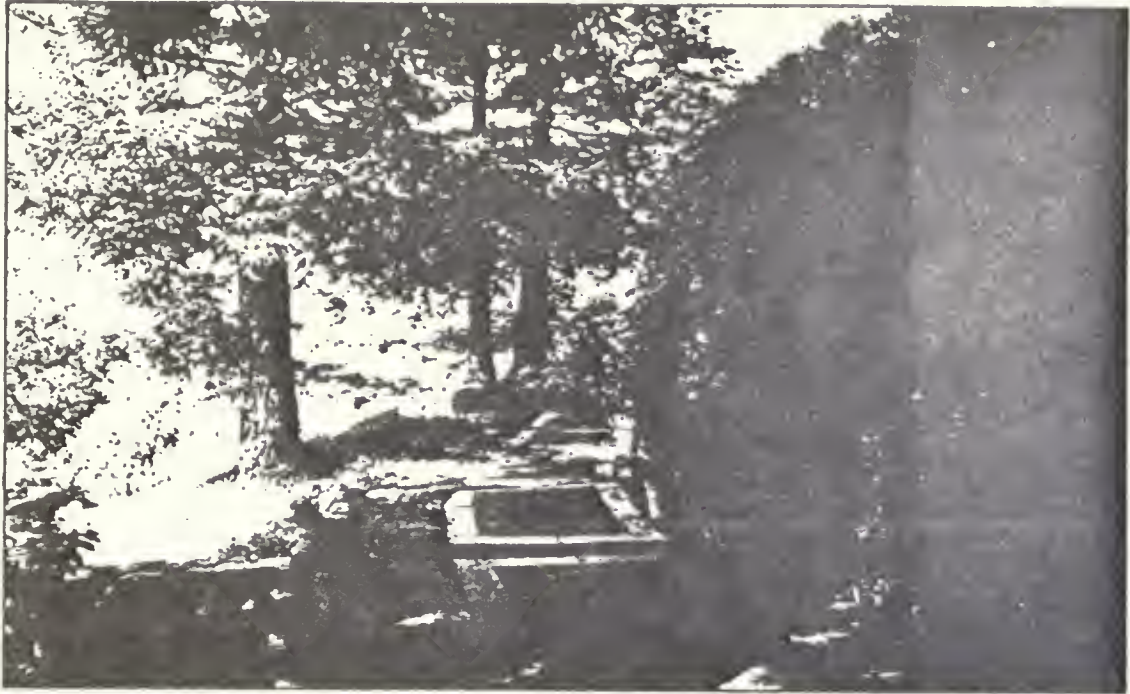
According to one of the owners, the style of architecture they wanted for their house stemmed from places they had admired while vacationing in the outskirts of Paris. From an array of collected clippings of buildings and architectural details, combined with an extensive list of requests, the architect designed an eclectic house.

The mansard roof, moulded cornice, wide fascia of the architrave and hospitality pineapples topping the corners of the entrance are drawn from French architecture of the 17th century.<sup>38</sup> Yet the house, a single-story stucco building, reflects a decidedly western rather than French style. The notion of French Baroque Classicism is aided and enhanced tremendously by the efforts of Thomas Church to articulate the details and play down the low linearity with carefully planned structural elements and planting.

#### Conclusion

In his early garden designs, such as the Clark House (1936, Woodside, California), Thomas Church can be said to have adhered to the traditional Beaux Arts rules. However, even as early as 1936, he had begun to bend those rules so that symmetry did not overpower the inherent qualities of the landscape. His designs early on were eclectic,





as he combined motifs from the Italian Renaissance, concepts from Cubism and Alvar Aalto and classic formality.

By the 1950s, he was even more of an experimenter. The traditional rectangular lawn with bordering shrubs became a useful place in which to live, play and work, as well as a dynamic garden space to be viewed. It was in a very real sense an extension of the house.

Church never really discarded his training in classical forms even though he experimented with other spatial concepts. He has been called the supreme eclectic and it is not a label that is unwarranted, but neither is it one which necessarily connotes a negative aspect.

One cannot over-emphasize that he has always striven to give his clients what they want, unlike so many other architects and landscape architects who all too often see every design as an opportunity for self-expression and self-aggrandizement. As he has so often stated, the landscape architect's job is not to build a monument to himself, but to fulfill the client's needs.

In terms of construction and materials, Church has set a precedent in

the profession which has influenced other landscape architects, architects, contractors and today's students. Working with his own construction crew and with contractors like Floyd Gerow for 40 years, he had a first-hand role in executing his designs. His "apprentices" — Robert Royston, Lawrence Halprin, George Rockrise, Jack Stafford, Casey Kawamoto — gained invaluable experience from training with Church in the field and admit an indebtedness to him.

Church's garden plans invariably include other important aspects of planning: the transition from house to garden and from garden to surroundings; circulation; uses; maintenance; integration of native and exotic plants; visually pleasing forms, etc.

Obelisks from Florence, lamps from Copenhagen, and teak benches from the Orient have found places in his gardens. Sculpture and garden furnishings have added needed accents in Church's designs all over the West Coast. His own garden is a showplace of collected treasures.

His interest in furnishings, which initiated the showroom the Churches operated in the '50s, led him also into designing. When he could not

*Path adjacent to north property boundary shows Church's meticulous hard-edging of changes in grade. Trees in left background are buttressed by stone circular retaining walls.*

find what he wanted among his souvenirs or in catalogs or warehouses, he created it.

The gardens described and illustrated in this article, reveal that Thomas Church knows what to borrow from the past. He possesses a special feeling for the land and works in it and with it masterfully. 

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(Continued on page 170)



# THOMAS CHURCH

(Continued from page 139)

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11. Fletcher Steele, *Design in the Little Garden* (Boston, 1924), pp. 19-24.

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14. See: *Sunset*, 78 (February 1937), p. 15.

15. Streatfield, *California Garden*.

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18. Laurie, *Thomas Church and the Evolution*, p. 10.

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22. James Rose, "Garden Details," *California Arts and Architecture*, 58 (July 1941), p. 29.

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24. See: "Modern Gardens," *House and Garden*, 79 (April 1941), p. 44.

25. Streatfield, *California Garden*; and *Interview with Robert Royston*.

26. See: "Valencia Gardens," *Pencil Points*, 25 (January 1944), p. 26-36.

27. See: Parkmerced Housing Project, "Arts and Architecture," 67 (April 1950), pp. 39-41.

28. *Interview with Robert Royston*.

29. Pam-Anela Messenger, *Conversation with Lawrence Halprin* (March 27, 1975).

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32. Thomas D. Church, *Gardens are for People* (New York, 1955).

33. Thomas D. Church, *Evening Discussion with the Northern California Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects*, San Francisco (February 9, 1971). Transcript courtesy of Michael M. Laurie, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of California, Berkeley.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Church, *Utility*, p. 9.

36. "Exterior Decoration," *Sunset*, 86 (June 1941), pp. 24-25.

37. Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Facsimile Edition of A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (New York, 1967), p. 53.

38. Henry A. Millon, *Baroque and*

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A new breed of college-educated landscape architects emerged in the late 1930s and in larger numbers after the war. Perhaps the chief innovator, or at least the elder statesman of garden design in California, is Thomas Church, who studied at Berkeley (and also Harvard). He set up his practice in 1930. His work was extremely influential on the profession of landscape architecture and also helped, through *House and Home* and *Starlet Magazine*, to shape public opinion about the form and use of the domestic garden, small or large, in California and elsewhere.

Developments in art and architecture in Europe, cubism and abstract expressionism, functional architecture, and the modern movement had their impact first on the East Coast but also in California. Modern architecture needed modern landscape architecture. Church and later Eckbo on the West Coast, James Rose on the East, and Christopher Tunnard and others in England became the avant garde of modern landscape architecture in the late 1930s. The landscape garden and the eclectic neoclassical garden were rejected.

The career of Thomas Church is considered here in detail for three reasons. First, he was an innovator like the other great designers in history whose works have already been discussed. He evolved an approach to design suited to the environment and social context in which he practiced. Second, his practice was almost exclusively in private gardens, which is the subject of this chapter. And third, his interest lay in the small garden.

The first ten years of Church's professional career were spent searching for new garden forms that would satisfy the changing needs of society and through which he could express the new aesthetic. With adventurous clients and young architects such as William Wurster, Gardner Daily, and Ernest Born, he found opportunities to experiment. He adopted a theory which followed that of the new architecture. This recognized three sources of form. The first consisted of human needs and the specific personal requirements and characteristics of the client. The second comprised the technology of materials, construction, and plants, including maintenance and a whole range of form determinants derived from the site, conditions and quality. The third was a concern for the spatial expression, which would go beyond the mere satisfaction of requirements and into the realms of fine art.

At first the garden forms he used were traditional with clipped hedges and eclectic motifs (Fig. 2.54). He designed small town gardens and wrote about the challenge they presented. He said that the small garden could not be "natural" if it was to serve as

an extension to the house. Their scale and use called for hard surfaces, screens to separate areas, and design forms that would increase their apparent size (Fig. 2.55). Church recognized that many people had small gardens, especially in urban settings where they have vital function as an outdoor room or to serve as a *giardino segreto* such as his own small garden behind a wall in San Francisco. Like it or not, he said, the function of the house had spilled out into the garden and must be provided for. The landscape architect no longer had a choice between the functional and the aesthetic approaches.

The increasing use of garden space was encouraged by modern architecture which provided direct access between house and garden. The use of the garden for outdoor entertaining, games, and children's play combined with the need to reduce maintenance resulted in the widespread introduction of paving materials and groundcover plants designed as simple shapes. Church recommended that the spatially wasteful front lawn should be dispensed with and showed the advantages of this in several examples in which the street was screened off by walls or fences, providing usable private space (Fig. 2.56).

In 1937 the San Francisco Museum of Art held an exhibition called Contemporary Landscape Architecture. The work illustrated was chiefly garden design but also included the important work of the U.S. Forest Service and the National Parks service. One model illustrated a "formistic" garden layout by

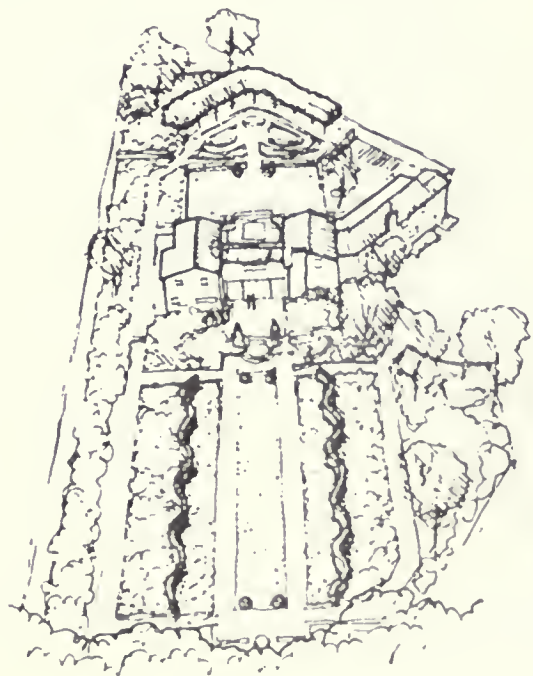


Fig. 2.54 California garden of the 1930's, by Thomas D. Church. House by William W. Wurster.

Thomas Church for a house by William Wurster in San Mateo (Fig. 2.54). The description stated that the garden was on both sides with direct access to the living room. Wurster and Church also combined on a fantasy pavilion. In this we see the beginnings of new curvilinear forms in the garden.

Church developed a theory based on cubism, that a garden should have no beginning and no end and that it should be pleasing when seen from any angle, not only from the house. Asymmetric lines were used to create greater apparent dimensions. Simplicity of form, line, and shape were regarded as more restful to look at and easier to maintain. Form, shape, and pattern in the gardens were provided by pavings, walls, and espaliered or trained plants.

Two small gardens designed for the 1940 Golden Gate Exposition marked the beginning of this new phase (Fig. 2.57). They demonstrated the possibilities for the evolution of new visual forms in the garden while satisfying all practical criteria. The central axis was abandoned in favor of multiplicity of viewpoints, simple planes, and flowing lines. Texture and color, space and form were manipulated in a manner reminiscent of the cubist painters. A variety of curvilinear shapes, textured surfaces, and walls were combined with a sure sense of proportion and the gardens incorporated some new materials such as corrugated asbestos and wooden paving blocks. Stylistically they were a very dramatic advance on all previous garden designs.

The genius of the California garden thus lies in the combination of numerous concepts and traditions and a recognition of local conditions. Landscape architects in Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, and Switzerland produced a European synthesis with equally distinctive results. The East Coast struggled with its obsession with the landscape tra-

dition and Burle Marx in Brazil developed an approach to design that is based on modern painting and botany.

San Francisco became the home of many of the best-known landscape offices in the country. In addition to Church and Eckbo (Fig. 2.58), Royston, Williams, Halprin, Osmundson, and others designed gardens in the Bay Area in the 1940s and 1950s. A second exhibition in 1948 at the San Francisco Museum of Art showed the development in style and form and also the wider range of projects being handled by landscape architects in California.

In the domestic work we see an expression of af-

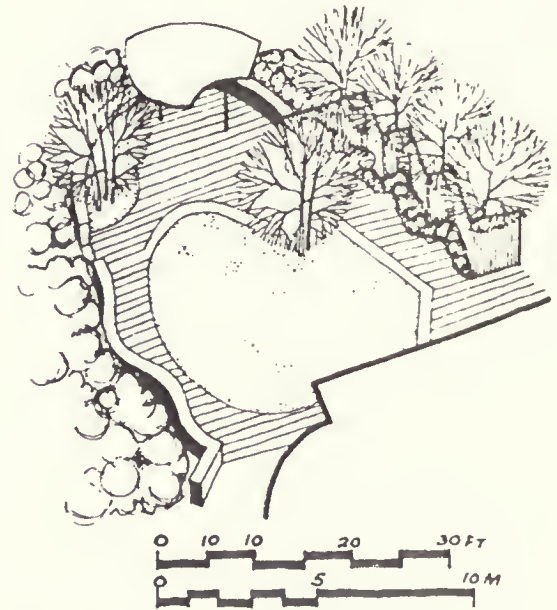


Fig. 2.57 Exhibition garden by Thomas D. Church, 1940.

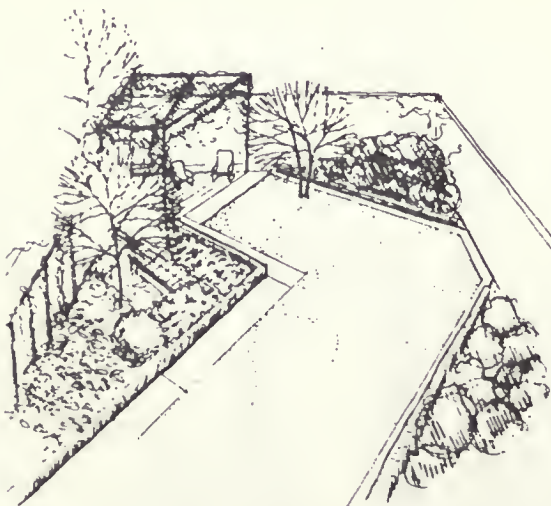


Fig. 2.55 Small garden in San Francisco, by Thomas D. Church (1940).

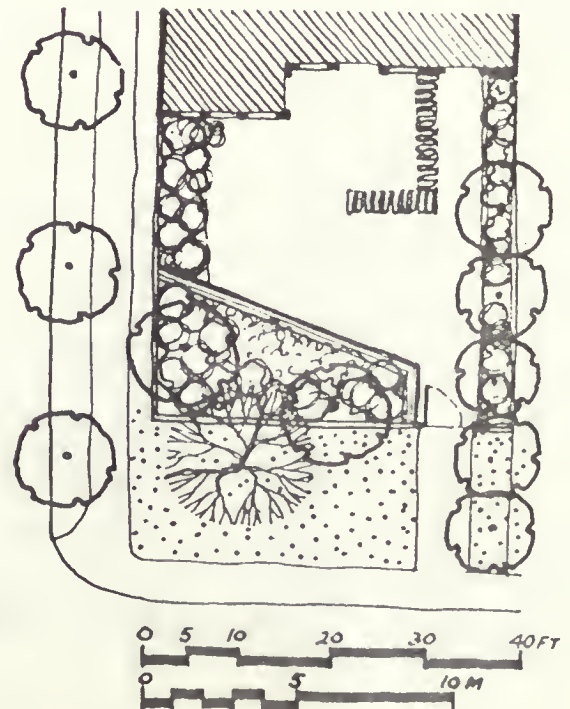


Fig. 2.56 Treatment of front garden by Thomas D. Church

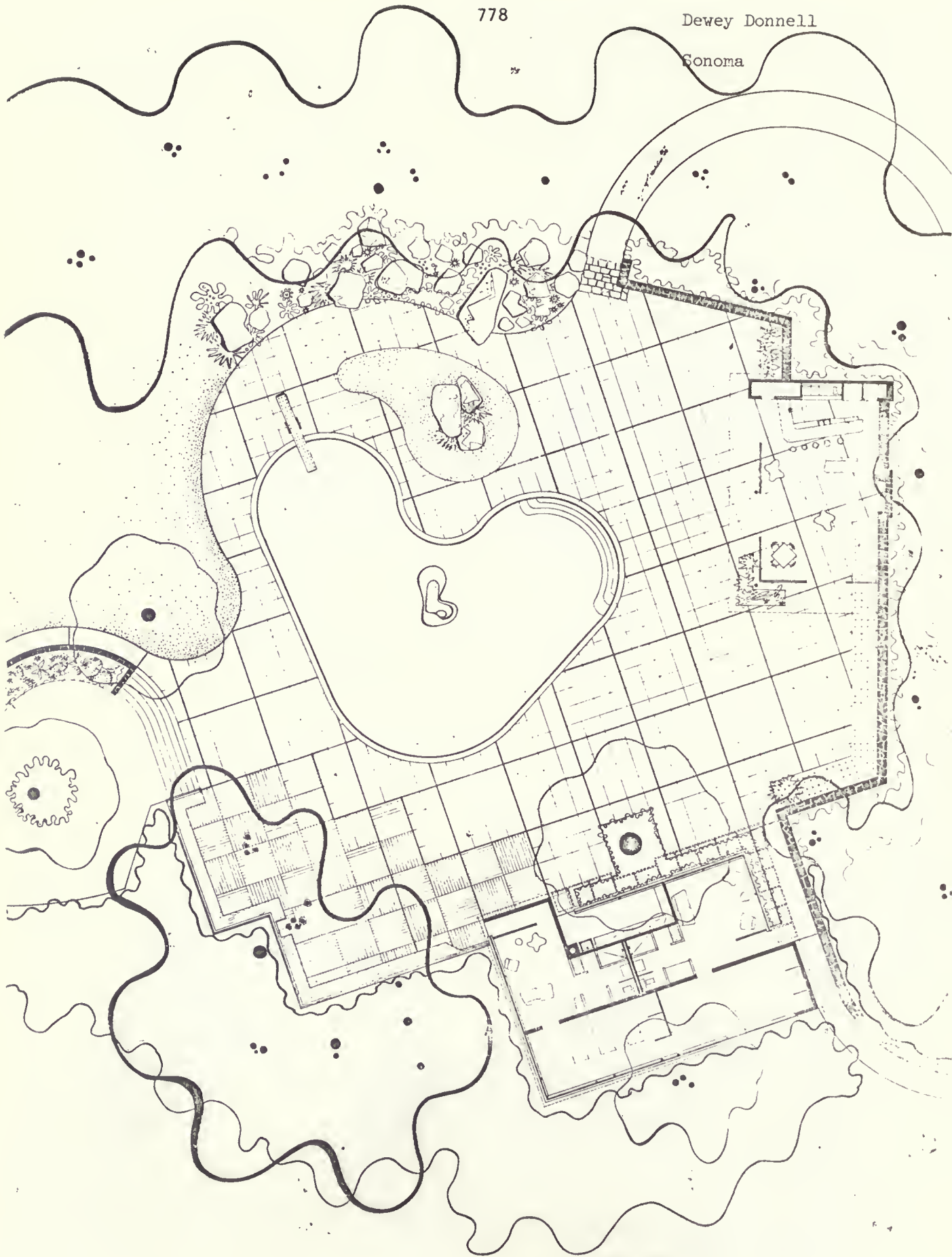


Fig. 2.59 Donnell Garden, California (1948) Thomas D. Church.

fluence and a delight with indoor outdoor living. Church's beach house at Aptos and the Donnell garden at Sonoma (Figs. 2.59 and 8.33) show this and also show further sophistication in his approach and in the manipulation of form. They represent in my view the peak of his career. The beach garden at Aptos introduces the idea of wood as a paving surface, relatively cheap in a timber zone and relatively maintenance free. One of the most beautiful modern gardens in the world, ranking with Villa Lante, is the Donnell garden at Sonoma. The form of the swimming pool, quite simple in plan, is more complex and elegant seen in perspective. The outline is

derived from the meandering of the Sonoma River in the flatlands seen below. The aesthetic connection between pool shape and forms in nature is dynamic. Contrasting with the flowing forms of the pool is a rectangular grid of concrete paving and wood decking. The decking is used in one place so that some existing live oaks could grow through and the ground remain undisturbed (Fig. 8.33). The garden shows concern for the existing and surrounding environment.

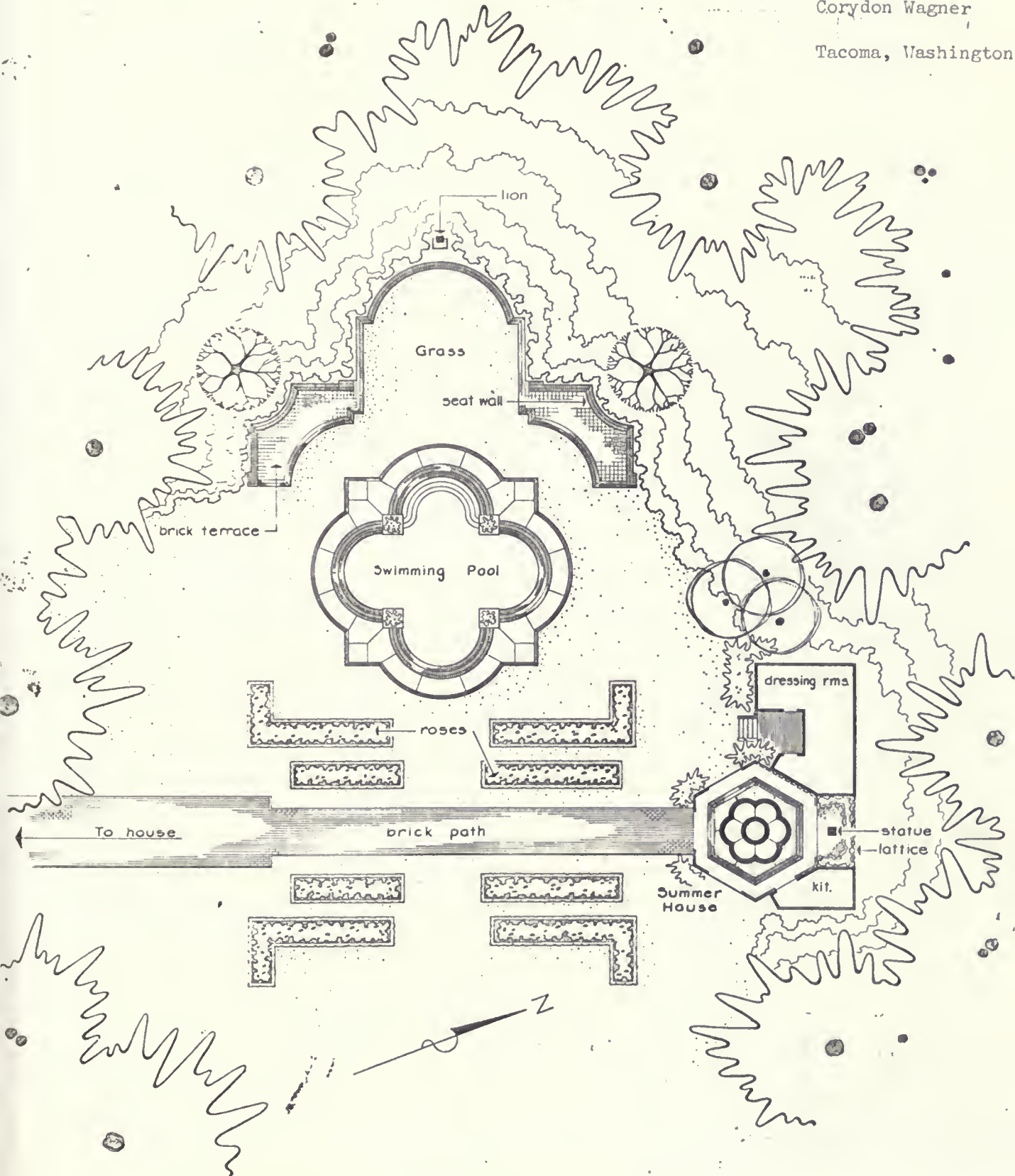






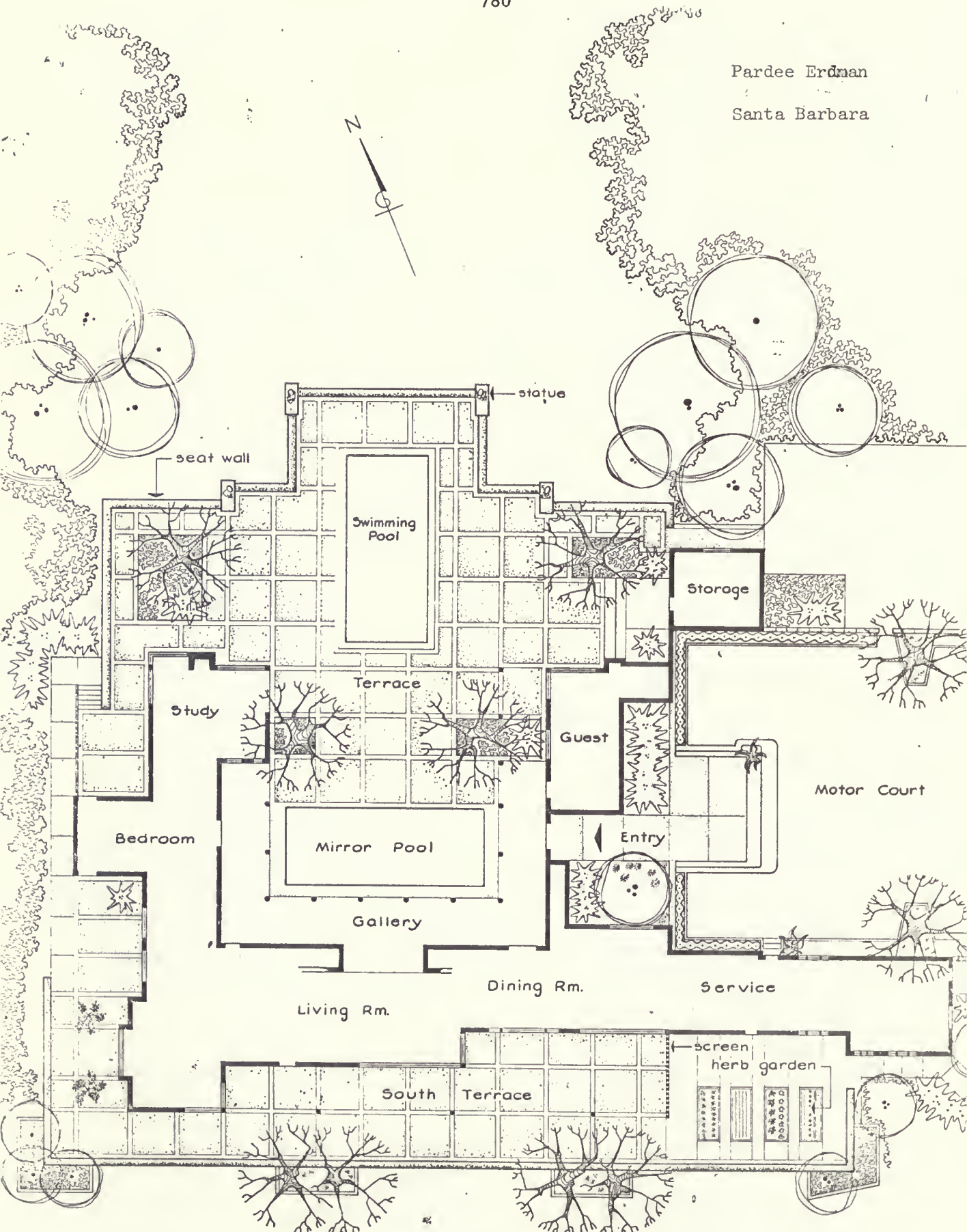
Corydon Wagner

Tacoma, Washington



Pardee Erdman

Santa Barbara



In April, 1967, ground was broken on the Whelan's Atherton property for a Cliff May-designed home. That summer the Whelans, who were familiar with the unity, simplicity and rationality of his work, met with Mr. Church. Jack stressed low maintenance and economy and Gail wanted the garden divided into "rooms". Church took notes and made a rough sketch on drafting paper as they talked; it was, according to Gail, immediately exciting and just what they wanted.

At their second meeting the Whelans were shown completed drawings. Jack wanted less lawn, and the second plan shows how this was modified around the pool. Mr. Church suggested at this time that the fixed glass planned by the architect for the children's bathroom be changed to doors, so as to give direct access to the play yard, and changing the window to a door from the living-room to lead to the rose garden, adding a practical aspect to the indoor-outdoor relationship.

The following spring concrete was poured in the patio and around the pool, and the beds in front of the house were planted. Three years later the play yard concrete was poured, and the play area beds planted. The ailanthus tree was already an accent in the play yard. The Prunus Lyonii hedge dividing the play yard and the rose garden will eventually be a total screen between the two areas and block out the adjacent neighbor's property.

Two years later a family room was added to the home, extending into the patio area, and the next spring the boxwood garden off the living room was graded, bricked and planted. The cabana near the pool has just been completed, with a slight modification on the basic Church drawings. Although the development of the Whelan

garden has been taking place over ten years, it all follows the

\*write up from May 1, 1977 Stanford Committee for the Arts Garden Tour



original Church plan. Mrs. Whelan feels that all the planting will be completed in about two years and that the garden will be at its peak ten years from now.

The Whelans enjoy the neat, orderly, uncluttered look, the privacy and division into "garden rooms", the different views from each room, the safety and practicality of the children's play yard, the use of wrought iron and adobe to accent the Spanish, or Mexican feeling of the house, the overall variety within unity. To quote the Whelans: "Tommy Church has trebled the physical usefulness and aesthetic excitement of our home...We are grateful for the incomparable and unique style with which he enhanced the quality of our family living."

In support of the foregoing statement, Mrs. Whelan listed the following special features of their home and garden:

- (1) Parking for 12 cars in entrance and service areas, arranged for ease of unparking any car individually.
- (2) Driveway may be used as play area for children with gates shut for protection.
- (3) Planting beds in carport downplay "garage" look.
- (4) Formal garden focal point of approach, framed by walls of same material as house.
- (5) Planting beds outside of all fixed-glass areas for indoor-outdoor garden effect.
- (6) Concrete on same level as house hallways and exits for same effect of indoor-exterior unity.
- (7) Inner patio a space-extender for kitchen-family room, dining room, living room and master bedroom, as it serves all these rooms with shared space.



- (8) Fruitless mulberry tree on patio sheds all leaves at once in December, which reduces pool cleaning, and canopies patio in summer for sun shade.
- (9) Rolling wrought iron fence can be closed to keep children from pool without pool appearing to be specifically fenced.
- (10) Pool accessible from service area, family room, bedroom hallway and master bedroom.
- (11) Pool narrowed at far end for illusion of greater length from the house.
- (12) Diving board eliminated to increase aesthetic appeal from house.
- (13) Steps down to pool compensate for raised elevation of house; also psychologically separate pool area.
- (14) Masonry seating in patio and pool area decrease need for furniture and accentuate architectural lines.
- (15) Play yard completely enclosed for safety, visible from master bedroom, directly accessible to children's bedrooms and bathroom; provides lawn area, firbarked area for toys and concrete circle for "rolling stock."
- (16) Formal garden, appropriately attached to living room, provides a quiet escape and a place for plants which need some protection from children.

## William Wallace Mein garden\*

We will end our Tommy Church Garden Tour at the beautiful and extensive gardens of the William Wallace Meins, where refreshments will be served. There are bathroom facilities in the guest house, near the swimming pool, and in the Bothy (gardner's cottage across from the stable and up the stairs.)

We will enter through the garden gate to the right of the main house, see the guest house terrace, greenhouse, main house terrace, swimming pool area and stable beyond. Then down the road via the Lath House, the cutting gardens and across the road to the Gazebo, where we will see Taki Yamata's Japanese and wild garden, and then past the cutting and rose gardens up the road to our buses.

Tommy Church is a cousin of Mrs. Mein; he had designed the garden of Mr. Mein's sister, Mrs. Frances De Bretteville. It took about a month for Mr. Church and the Meins to come to a "meeting of the minds" on the site planning; some grading had to be done to achieve the south garden. This is a total Church garden, but, as Mrs. Mein said, "no garden is ever finished", and, whereas the basic plan was completed in three years, the Meins are still working on the wild garden near the Gazebo. Watch out for the poison oak in that area which Mr. Mein is gradually eliminating.

The William Wallace Mein garden in Woodside, in the foothills of California's Coast Range, is in a fair weather belt. The garden has a 300-day growing season. Summer temperatures average 77 degrees and occasional low winter temperatures go to 24 degrees. Built in 1951, a triumph of Tommy Church's site and garden planning, and Gardner Dailey's indoor-outdoor design, the house faces due south

with a west wing to shut off prevailing westerlies and the glare of  
 \* write-up from May 1, 1977 Stanford Committee for the Arts Garden Tour

the summer afternoon sun.

The guest house, terrace and garden center are separated from the rest of the garden by Texas Privet. Other outbuildings include a Stable, Bothy and Shop. In the stable area there is a fountain in a large watering trough which resembles those used by Mrs. Mein's cattleking ancestor, Henry Miller. As we stand by the garden gate of the guest house, an optical illusion is created by one retaining wall and the trapezoid-shaped pool. Observe the projection of the terrace extending into the pool area, large enough for a table and chairs and designed for easy supervision of the pool area when the Mein children were young. Along the wall approaching the pool Star Jasmine has been planted for summer fragrance and Liquid Ambar for autumn color. Behind this wall is a wild hillside, full of daffodils in the spring, and a glimpse of the mountains.

Large native Live Oaks provide a solid green background. Four oaks were boxed in 1950 before being moved the following year. One has grown to enormous size and dominates the garden. Brick paving and redwood retaining walls are used extensively. Container planting is used ~~extensively~~, especially for Wysteria and spring bulbs. Late summer planting features include a raised bed of small, medium and large Marigolds.

On approaching the house above the orchard one sees terraced beds for vegetables and cutting flowers, topped by a rose garden. Features of the cutting garden are Zinnias in the summer and Chrysanthemums in the fall. The garden is maintained by one head gardener with one man half-time. Labor saving techniques are used wherever possible. These include an electric Harley-Davidson Utility Cart, power mowers, edging tools, sweepers. An Efficiently laid out work center and an 18 ft. x 36 ft. lathhouse and a 9 ft x 18 ft greenhouse are worth noting.



from an interview conducted August 14, 1974 by Charlotte McDonald and Carolyn Caddes for *Peninsula Living*:

*Trailblazer and innovator though he is, Thomas Church has never forgotten that the garden belongs to the client.*

IF IT WERE not for Thomas D. Church, the word California might never have become synonymous with "indoor-outdoor living." In his 44-year career as a landscape architect, Thomas Church has pioneered the transformation of the California garden from a mere outdoor decoration into an integral part of the house itself — a landscape to live, work and play in.

Among his innovations are the elimination of the large, space-wasting front lawn, the moving of "foundation planting" away from the house and out into the garden, the development of curved terraces and driveways and uniquely-shaped pools, and the creation of inviting entryways. Following his lead, a generation of landscape architects has helped make some gardens into special, soul-restoring places where, in Church's words, "Man can recapture his natural affinity for the soil, if only on Saturday afternoons."

Church's San Francisco office occupies the second floor of a pre-earthquake building on Jackson Street. The barefloored, high-ceilinged rooms are as comfortably unpretentious as the occupant himself. Here, surrounded by photographs of past work, plans of ongoing projects, and samples of construction materials, the master landscaper revealed something about himself.

Since he began his practice in 1930, as landscape architect for Pasetiempo Estates near Santa Cruz, Church has designed more than 2,000 gardens, most of them in the Bay Area, but some of them as distant as Panama or Paris. Some are large public projects like the Sunset Magazine grounds in Menlo Park (viewed by an estimated 50,000 visitors annually); master plans for Stanford University and the University of California campuses at Berkeley and Santa Cruz; the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.; the General Motors Research Center in Detroit; and part of the gardens in Colonial Williamsburg.

But it is for his residential gardens that Thomas Church is probably best known. His designs grace formally elegant estates where the gardens cost a cool \$200,000, as well as small subdivision backyards built to integrate tricycles, swing sets, parties and vegetables. In general, all Thomas Church gardens show a strong respect for the nature of the existing site, an imaginative use of materials, and a firm authority of design. Individually, however, the gardens are as varied as their owners — reflecting

the philosophy of Church's 1955 book, "Gardens Are for People."

"What I'm concerned with is to be sure the people get a design they want and they'll be happy in," said Church. "People are all different. Some want roses and some want squash. And I can't do anything for anybody unless they talk to me. I went back to Richmond, Va., last year, and the people said, 'We've read so many of your articles and seen your pictures, that we're not going to say anything. We just want you to do it!' So I said, 'Well, take me back to the airport, then.' I told them, 'You talk to me for an hour, then I'll talk to you. The garden must be yours, not the designer's.'"

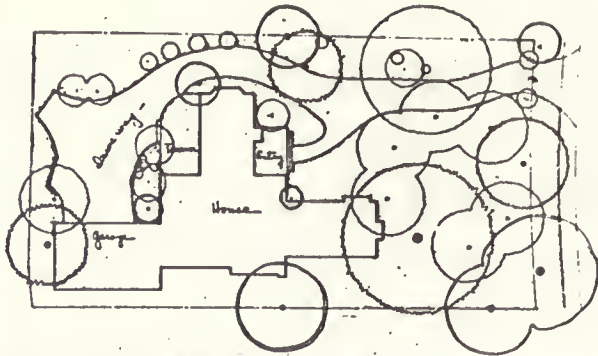
This concern for the tastes, needs, and whims of the individual is reflected in a project Church is currently installing — a two-acre estate bordered by a jogging track. Church smiled as he pointed out the features of the plan, which hangs on his office wall.

"The owner wanted a pool and a tennis court and a jogging thing around the perimeter. His wife wanted the least maintenance possible." Church's solution was to plant a small forest between the jogging track and the house, pool and court area, and then fence it off. "They'll have oaks and flowering cherries and fall color that will show over the fence, and all they have to do to that ground out there is turn it over once a year."

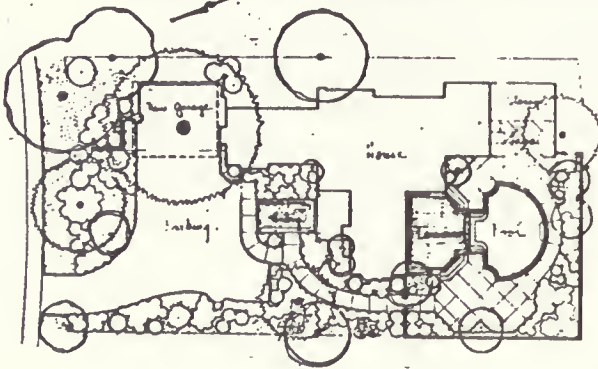
Church designed an equally unorthodox landscape for a family who wanted to swim and ride horses and didn't want to garden at all. For them, he installed a pool, paddock, and patio, with a couple of trees and a few pots of geraniums. But willing as he is to help people attain the ideal of "year-round beauty and low maintenance," Church is always delighted when he finds a client who's dedicated to the care of a traditionally formal garden.

Is there a trend toward less formally-arranged gardens today, the kind where plantings look as though they have merely "occurred" through some fortunate whim of nature?

"Well, people talk about informality," said Church, "but they don't always know what it means. A lady came in a few years ago and said, 'Do you do informal gardens?' She showed me a couple of pictures and said, 'This is so lovely and informal.' They were English gardens, and famous ones. I have a book on them. So I got out the book and showed her the plan, and it was the most formal garden you can possibly have. But the foliage and the trees came up and gave her the sense of informality. Most people, in the beginning, say they want an 'informal' garden. So I ask them, 'Do you want informal garden, or do you just want to feel informal in it?' That's what they're after. If you want peace and serenity, very often — we won't call it geometric — but a formal garden has more serenity than an informal one."



"A pool is a place to gather around," Church believes, "much as a fireplace is in a room." When he remodeled Pasetiempo garden (top) pool and terrace became outdoor focal point. Church turned lot upside-down (below) with new landscaping plan to utilize former driveway area.



Many Thomas Church gardens are informal, but they are never haphazard. Underlying even the most "natural" looking landscape are strong design lines that will determine the garden's appearance for many years to come. "If you don't have strong lines, your planting will kill the whole thing," says Church. "Especially here in California where every shrub wants to grow into a tree, eventually." For this reason, he advocates the use of hedges and clipped shrubs to separate and define garden space. "People say, 'We don't want all that maintenance,' but you only have to clip these twice or three times a year, a couple of hours. And you spend much more time on an informal bunch of shrubs, knocking them back and trying to make them look right."

Church followed a somewhat convoluted path into landscape architecture. He was born in 1902 in Boston, of parents who were diversely creative. His father, an inventor, developed the first widely produced washing machine. Mrs. Church, an elocutionist, appeared on some of the earliest programs on radio station KGO in San Francisco.

The family moved to California when Church was a small boy, and he was educated at Berkeley High (Class of '18), University of California (23) and Harvard (25).

As a pre-law student at Cal he took a course called "History of Landscaping" to fulfill a liberal arts requirement. "I had worked in my garden at home, ever since I was a little boy, but I didn't know there was a profession," he said. This discovery led him to pursue a master's degree in landscape architecture at Harvard, followed by two years of study in Europe on a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship.

He later taught the subject at Ohio State and the University of California at Berkeley, and earned for his design work the Fine Arts Medal of the American Institute of Architects, the Gold Medal of the New York Architectural League, and numerous other honors.

Recalling his first job as a landscape architect for Pasetiempo Estates in 1930, Church said, "This little 18-year-old kid came up and said, 'Can I help you? I don't know any job. I haven't got a job. I'll work on your place for \$4 a day.' And he did! His name was Floyd Gerow. When I left Pasetiempo to come up here, he came up too, and he and I installed our first San Francisco garden in 1933. Floyd was a pretty good bricklayer, so I hauled the bricks, and he laid them."

Floyd Gerow, who later became a landscape contractor on the Peninsula, lives in a Palo Alto home with a handsome, Church-designed, Gerow-installed garden. After 22 years, Gerow says of his garden, "We're perfectly delighted."

What about the first San Francisco garden? "It was for a wonderful old gal," said Church. "And I made a window into a door, which a lot of people do, but she was amazed. She said, 'You mean I can walk right out into the garden?'" (Prior to the early '30s, California gardens had been ornamental but not very useful areas, to be viewed from windows or balconies, usually accessible only from the kitchen door.)

And how about the future of landscape architecture? Will the trend be away from individual gardens toward more shared space? After 40 years of moving the house out into the garden, will the shortage of land reverse the trend and force the garden to move inside the house? Will the individual backyard be phased out of existence?

"Well, I think that's happening more and more in these projects where the company builds the houses — either condominiums or attached houses or single houses — but they always leave people a little space for their own satisfaction. But the big change — that I knew — was in the '30s. No one had any money, and you had to do a garden that didn't take a lot of maintenance. That may be happening again now."

We wondered about another current development in gardening — the theory that plants have emotions and can communicate with humans. We told him about an African violet we knew, who seems to like human conversation.

"Do you talk to it? Cares it?" asked Church. We explained that the violet had thrived when we gave it the name Helen and moved it to the center of a conversation-filled dining room table.

Thomas Church lifted a wise eyebrow and smiled. "The light was better on the dining room table, probably," he smiled some more. "There's a whole book out on that, you know. My wife read it. She liked it."

One final question to the self-described "dirt gardener." Is it more satisfying to work in a garden than to work at a desk?

"Well," he said, "it would be for me, and it would be for a lot of people."

This may explain why people with Thomas Church gardens received occasional surprise visits from the designer, "just checking up." Around Stanford's White Plaza, students probably don't even notice the gentleman in work clothes, with a tape measure attached to his belt and clippers in hand, who stops to give an exuberant shrub a bit of gentle grooming. It's just Thomas Church, dirt-gardener and artist, doing his job.

RECORDED AT THE PALO ALTO TIMES-REDWOOD CITY LIBRARY

Saturday, Oct. 26, 1974



## Landscape Architect Thomas Church

Landscape architect Thomas Church, internationally known for his residential gardens and college campus planning, died yesterday in his San Francisco home after a long illness. He was 76.

Church, who practiced at his office at 402 Jackson street for 45 years until ill health forced him to retire in 1977, was a principal planner for Stanford University and the University of California campuses at Berkeley and Santa Cruz.

A native of Boston, Church was graduated from Berkeley and received a master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

In 1929, he worked with architect William Wurster to design the Pasatiempo Estate in Santa Cruz before opening his San Francisco office in 1932.

In 1940, he designed the Exposition Garden at the Golden Gate International Exposition at Treasure Island.

He was known as one of the founders of modern landscape architecture, and his elegant, informal residential gardens were instinctively suited to the residence and the location, as well as the tastes of the client.

In the early 1960s, he was the principal landscape architect for the new University of California campus at Santa Cruz.

Perhaps his best known San Francisco work is the Court of Honor between the War Memorial Opera House and the Veterans' Building, revealing Church in his grandest manner of French Baroque.

"Without question he was one of the pioneers of modern architec-



**THOMAS CHURCH**  
**A pioneer in his field**

ture in America," said Lawrence Halprin, who started his career in Church's office together with Robert Royston, Garrett Eckbo and other young designers who later became famous on their own.

Church was one of the first to see the full potential of integrating the indoors and outdoors in the relaxed but highly civilized regional architecture that became known throughout the world as "the Bay Area Style."

Among his many awards were the Fine Arts Medal of the American Institute of Architecture, the Gold Medal of the American Society of Landscape Architects and a fellowship of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

For the last several years, he

suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

The disease forced his confinement to his home, where he continued working on a revision of his first book, "Gardens Are for People," first published in 1955.

Surviving are his wife, Elizabeth Roberts Church; two daughters, Judith Church McAllister of Seal Beach and Belinda Church, residing in Italy; two grandchildren and a sister, Margaret Cox of Santa Barbara.

Funeral arrangements are incomplete.





### THOMAS DOLLIVER CHURCH

Born: Boston, Massachusetts, 1902.

Family moved to California when Church was a few months old.

#### Education:

Berkeley High School, Berkeley, California.

University of California, Berkeley: AB Degree in Landscape Architecture.

Harvard University: Graduate School of Landscape Architecture, MS Degree.

Sheldon Fellowship of Travel: one year studying in France, Spain, England & Italy.

#### Experience:

Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture, Ohio State University.

Assistant Professor, Landscape Design Division, University of California.

Landscape Architect for Pasatiempo Estates, Santa Cruz, California.

Private Practice: Office at 402 Jackson Street, San Francisco, 1933 to present.

#### Awards:

Fine Arts Medal - American Institute of Architects (1950)

Gold Medal - New York Architectural League

Doctor of Laws - North Carolina State College

Honorary Fellowship of American Institute of Interior Designers (1970)

Honor Award of American Society of Landscape Architects (1971)

Citation for Outstanding Contributions from American Horticultural Society (1974)

Gold Medal from American Society of Landscape Architects (1976)

Design Award for Residential Design, City of Menlo Park, California (1976)

#### Significant Large Scale Work:

Park Merced, San Francisco, California.

Sunset Magazine, Menlo Park, California.

Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa.

Caterpillar Tractor Company, Peoria, Illinois.

General Motors Research Center, Detroit, Michigan.

Master Plan for Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Master Plan for University of California, Berkeley.

Master Plan for University of California, Santa Cruz.

Strybing Arboretum Home Demonstration Gardens, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

War Memorial Opera House Garden, San Francisco.

#### Books by Thomas Church:

Gardens Are For People, 1955

Your Private World, 1969

#### Landscape Architects who started their careers in Church's office:

Lawrence Halprin

Jack Stafford

Robert Royston

Casey Kawamoto

Walter Guthrie

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